

# HITLER'S WAR

Vol. 1 - IV

BY  
H. R. AIYER

*C. S. Raja & Co*

SRIVARAHAM STREET  
TRIVANDRUM

# CONTENTS

## Hitler's War—Part 1.

### PAGE

Prelude	...	...	...	1
Rhineland Occupied	...	...	...	6
The Spanish Interlude	...	...	...	8
Towards Austria	...	...	...	12
Austria Struggles	...	...	...	13
The Nazi Putsch	...	...	...	21
The Tragedy of Schuschnigg	...	...	...	23
Czechoslovakia	...	...	...	34

## Hitler's War—Part 2.

Munich Started the War	...	...	49
The Aftermath of Munich	...	...	50
The Fall of Poland	...	...	56
Western Front	...	...	62
Hitler's Peace Offensive	...	...	66
Russia Invades Finland	...	...	68
Battle of River Plate	...	...	71
Invasion of Norway	...	...	72
The Low Countries Fight	...	...	79
The Miracle of Dunkirk	...	...	88

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is the first volume of the Second World War. It contains two parts, which were published twice before, but in two separate booklets. This is the first time that the two booklets are printed together to form one volume.

The first part describes Hitler's conquests before the actual outbreak of the war, carried out by bluff, bluster and blackmail, and which brought to his bag Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia. The second part starts from Munich and traces the course of the war to the miraculous British withdrawal from the Jaws of Death at Dunkirk. The special feature of this book is that besides being a historical narrative, it is a commentary of the war as a whole.

# Hitler's War

## PRELUDE

Hitler came to power in Germany by denouncing the Versailles Treaty. Though the Treaty was imposed upon the vanquished by the victor, it went beyond the bounds of human justice. The Treaty aimed at the permanent victimization of Germany by the Allies. The makers of the Treaty must have forgotten the fact that no nation can be kept under permanent subjection and that one day or other the vanquished will rise again and march triumphantly to regain the prestige and possessions lost in previous battles. This is what has happened to Germany. The victory of the Great War might have gone to the heads of the Allies as it was but natural with every victor and drunk with the glory of the victory they imposed such crushing terms on Germany as to maim that great military nation for ever. Though the German people bore the humiliation inflicted upon them by the Treaty of Versailles, the fire of revenge was kindled in every heart and as time went by it was slowly but steadily smouldering into a flame and was waiting for a suitable occasion to leap out and devour the Treaty that had humiliated and imposed upon the Germans the War Guilt. With the coming of Hitler in Germany as the leader of the Nazi Party the smouldering embers of hatred of the Versailles Treaty leapt out into innumerable tongues, flames and dangerously threatened not only to establish a dictatorial Government at home, but also to regain the prestige of the German Nation and the old German Empire and to fight a victorious battle against the old enemies.

decided to work sincerely for establishing a peaceful world, and as if to give practical expression to their ideas, they imposed on themselves the responsibility of reducing their armaments with a view to demonstrate their earnestness regarding disarmaments. Many of the smaller nations of Europe rallied round the democratic countries but the militant nations of Europe, Italy and Germany, and the Socialist State, Russia, never concealed their dislike of the peace policy of the victors of the Great War. Here it is to be remembered that though Italy was one of the victor nations of the Great War, she was completely dissatisfied with the way in which she was belittled by her Allies. And under the leadership of Mussolini, Italy began to develop a distrust of the good intentions of her former Allies. Besides, she began to develop her own independent policy based on the past glory of her ancestors. The Italians began to dream of a new Roman Empire and began to realise that Britain and France stood in the way of her expansion and development as a first class power in Europe. Hence the Italians viewed with suspicion all the peace-moves of their former Allies.

Italy had become a Fascist State under the Premiership of Mussolini who set at naught the democratic principles. He was rapidly arming the Italians and was feeding them daily with the hope that Italy would, by the might of her arms, seize the colonies and purely Italian towns and regions from the French. He also made the Italians believe that Italy would have an Empire in a short time. Though Italy sent her representatives to the Disarmament Conferences and showed a desire to study all the peace-proposals of the Democracies, she was racing with her armament programme all the while. As if to forecast the coming events, Mussolini declared from time to time that

of aggression, the League imposed sanctions on Italy, but with little effect. France was not willing to carry the sanctions to the point of war with Italy, for France could not devote her military forces to save Abyssinia when a formidably armed Germany was waiting for her opportunity on her Eastern border. And Britain was unwilling to drag a reluctant France with her to engage in a war with Italy which might spread to the whole world. Thus Italy found two opponents, one of whom would not fight and the other would not fight alone. Thus it came about that though the League applied its sanctions on Italy it lacked the power to enforce it. This emboldened Germany to start her Empire-building adventure.

#### RHINELAND OCCUPIED

On March 16, 1935, Hitler proclaimed the re-establishment of general compulsory military service for the German people. On March 7, 1936 he denounced the Treaty of Locarno (which was a non-aggression pact), made proposals for an alternative non-aggression pact, and sent 40,000 troops to reoccupy the Rhineland. This was the beginning of Hitler's War with the Western Democracies.

At this critical moment France was fully occupied with the social revolution which called itself the 'Front Populaire'. The agitation for a socialist form of Government began some time before the 1936 elections, and when the results were foreseen and an interim Government, without any real power occupied the scene, Germany seized the opportunity of re-militarising the Rhineland. The British were concerned with the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, while the French were interested only in the anticipated success of the strange combination of Socialists, Communists, and Radicals at the polls. Yet that audacious move of Hitler

which in other circumstances, could certainly have been prevented marked the turning point of European diplomacy. It is incredible, looking back, to see how easily it was effected. There was virtually no opposition, though it was well known that the Germans were ready to retreat if seriously challenged. This initial success made Hitler believe two things. The first that Britain would not fight under any circumstances and the second, that France could not fight alone. Also the German success undermined the prestige of France in Central Europe. The occupation of Rhineland by Germany cut off France from her European proteges, and Germany rapidly constructed fortifications along the Siegfried Line.

Another outcome of the impotence of the Western Powers to nip German aspirations in the bud was the Rome-Berlin axis. The Front Populaire Government, under the leadership of Leon Blum was definitely anti-Fascist, and it broke diplomatic relations with Italy by withdrawing the French Ambassador from Rome. British attitude towards Italy regarding sanctions alienated her friendship with that country, with the result that Italy went to the German camp.

The birth of the Rome Berlin axis was a great triumph to Hitler. It made his way clear to the longed for Austrian Anschluss. Who prevented Hitler from annexing Austria in 1934? It was Mussolini, who marched his troops to the Brenner Pass that stopped the German aggression. By joining the German camp Mussolini had allowed Hitler a free hand not only in Austria, but also in the whole of Eastern Europe. The Rome Berlin axis gave great impetus to the German people to continue undaunted their Empire building adventure.

## THE SPANISH INTERLUDE

In the latter half of the year 1936 Civil War broke out in Spain. At that time Spain was ruled by the 'Fronte Popular Government' which was a twin brother of the 'Front Populaire Government' in France. It was very commonly believed that the Franco rebellion was greatly supported by Germany and Italy, while the Spanish Government had the support of Soviet Russia. In France the masses favourably reacted to the Spanish trouble. They wanted the French Government to actively help or intervene in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Spanish Government. They thought that the Spanish War was a duel between the forces of Fascism and Communism, and as such it was the duty of the French people to help their political co-religionists. In addition, Frenchmen in any case, would be deeply affected by any dramatic events in Spain, as the racial and cultural ties between the two people are secular and of very great strength.

I have dealt in detail about the German and Italian intervention in Spain in my book "**The Spanish War and Who Made it?**" Here it only requires to be mentioned that Hitler wanted to take the best advantage of the Spanish situation to drag France into a war. France was hopelessly divided and was unprepared militarily to meet a German attack. And again the conclusion of Rome Berlin axis had strengthened the Fascist-Front to attack France. Hitler's move was to drag France into a war when that country was least prepared for any fighting.

M. Leon Blum, the Socialist Prime Minister of France, did not allow himself to be swamped by the zeal and ardour of his troops though he shared the enthusiasm of the people to the fullest extent. M. Blum was a Socialist

and an eloquent party leader. His statesmanship was never before put to the test. When the occasion came to try his statesmanship he creditably withstood the test. I should say that in this crisis the statesman triumphed over the Socialist. M. Blum grasped the reality of the Spanish trouble. Though he did not completely discredit the popular conception of the Civil War as a duel between the forces of Fascism and Communism he did not accept the popular notion fully. He knew that what the people believed was only a half truth. In reality Germany and Italy were endeavouring to force France to range behind the Madrid Government and if he submitted to the popular demand he would be only playing Hitler's game.

M. Blum taking courage in his hands declared neutrality though he knew full well that the policy of neutrality was beset with many dangers. Besides he appealed to all other nations to follow the lead given by France. With the exception of Germany and Italy all the other nations accepted the French proposals. At first Italy assumed a don't care attitude to the French proposals but after some reflections she came round to accept the French proposals. Mussolini is a realist he perceived clearly the dangers involved in assuming a defiant attitude and openly ranging behind Franco and precipitating a World War. Italy could not afford to run the risk of a European war at a time when 300 000 of her troops were locked up in Abyssinian fortresses.

Herr Hitler was inclined to go on with the Spanish adventure. But the chiefs of the Reichswehr intervened and reminded him that the German army despite its intensive reorganisation was not yet in a fit state to cope with a potential coalition. They pointed out to him that as Italy had accepted the Blum plan Germany would be

greatly weakened if she stood alone. Hitler accepted the French proposals and a few hours later issued his decree introducing two year's military service to all German people.

Unfortunately the Blum plan did not run its full course. Italy and Germany violated the neutrality agreement and steadily supplied the anti-Reds with armaments and services. The continuous violation of the neutrality agreement led M. Yvon Delbos, the French Foreign Minister, to utter a grave warning. He said that the French nation had a right to demand of Italy and Germany how those two nations made non intervention a mockery. He said that non-intervention was a measure observed by the ones and violated by the others.

Strangely enough France could do no more than give a warning. In England, the Chamberlain Government had embarked on a programme of appeasement of the dictators. This sealed French freedom and French prestige in Europe.

The Spanish Civil War had an international aspect. The battle cries of Communism and Fascism, however unreal in Spain itself, were full of meaning to the foreign auxiliaries on both sides. Italian Fascists and German Nazis fought in the insurgent ranks; and on the Government side were Russian Communists, German anti Nazis and Italian anti-Fascists. Smaller groups of sympathisers from several countries were to be found in both camps. Thus Spain had become the battle field of rival political ideologies. The Spanish War was almost a European Civil War. But it is worth noting here that the person mainly responsible for imparting this universal or ideological aspect to the Spanish War was, beyond doubt, Herr Hitler.

The 'anti Bolshevik' complex had been strong in National Socialism from the start. During the first two years of the regime it was directed primarily against Communists in Germany, thereafter it was directed against Communism abroad. With the signing of the Russo-German Pact in 1938 Hitler has apparently dropped the 'anti Bolshevik' complex but it cannot be taken for granted that Herr Hitler has once for all merged National Socialism with Communism. Though the Russo German Pact was a move to thwart efforts of the Western Powers to encircle Germany, it was not an attempt to cement the two ideologies. Hitler has given credence to this view when he emphasised the point more than once in his speeches, saying that in spite of the Russo German Pact Germany remains Nazi and Russia remains Communist.

The Franco Russian Pact signed in 1935 increased the 'anti Bolshevik' complex in Germany. When France viewed with alarm the rapid militarisation of Germany by Herr Hitler she invited Russia to conclude a mutual assistance treaty with her. Russia agreed and the Pact was signed. Hitler thought that the Franco Russian co-operation was a move to encircle Germany and to thwart her ambitions in Eastern Europe. Hence he embarked on a policy of attacking Communism abroad. The Spanish War provided a first rate opportunity. In helping Franco's rebellion Herr Hitler fancied that he was crushing the dragon of Communism in Spain. Again it gave him an opportunity to try the valour of his pilots and the efficiency of his planes.

Franco's success in the Civil War proved beyond doubt that German military power was the best in Europe. This emboldened Hitler to annex Austria. The British attitude towards the Spanish War convinced Hitler that

Britain would not hinder his annexing Austria. The Chamberlain Government wanted a victory for Franco. This was not because that the British ruling class was in favour of Nazism, but because it was deadly against Communism. The rulers of Britain could not stomach even the idea of a shadowy form of a Communist State existing as their neighbour. Thus British neutrality in the Spanish Civil War was morally beneficial to Franco as well as to Hitler.

### TOWARDS AUSTRIA

While the attention of the world was drawn to the Spanish Civil War Hitler prepared for the Anschluss.

The annexing of Austria by Herr Hitler was not done in a day. Though the actual marching of the German troops into Austria was effected within a few hours, the preparation for the event of annexing the country began even before Hitler became the dictator of Germany. A casual reading of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* will reveal to the reader that one of the greatest desires of Hitler was the uniting of Austria with Germany. Again, when he became the Leader of the Nazi Party he included the 'Union of Austria with Germany' as one of the chief aims of the Party. If one remembers how Hitler, when he was a boy, felt his position of belonging to neither Austria nor Germany as the result of his being born just on the Austro-German border, one can easily comprehend his keen desire to unite these two nations, speaking the same language, following nearly the same customs and manners. Again, Hitler must have thought that by uniting Austria with Germany he would be effacing the humiliation he suffered in his childhood. From more than one view point Hitler was determined to absorb Austria into the Reich.

With this view in mind he had out elaborate plans for the destruction of Parliamentary Government in Austria. He sent his agents to Austria as early as 1932 to organise and develop a strong Nazi Party in that country. He instructed his agents to follow the same methods he followed in Germany to destroy the Social Democratic Party in that country. But for these preliminary preparations Hitler would not have succeeded in annexing Austria in 1938.

I believe that I am justified in making a diversion here. To me it seems that to understand Hitler's efforts to annex Austria one should go back some twenty years to learn the birth of the Austrian Republic. I can assure my readers that a little endurance on their part to hear the life story of the Austrian Republic will reward them by bringing to them facts which would not only give them an insight into the affairs of the first free country which fell a victim to Nazism but also tell them the interesting story of a little nation which struggled in vain to lead a free life.

### AUSTRIA STRUGGLES

Little Austria with its six million population was the real heir to the glories of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. As the old Monarchy crumbled down after the Great War, the masses of Vienna took into their own hands the reins of Government which fell into them almost without efforts. The last of the Austrian Monarchs, Karl, was a very weak ruler and so the masses did not find it very difficult to force him to renounce his power. The Emperor, thinking that the wisest way to save the country from a bloody Civil War was to yield to the demands of the masses, renounced his right to govern the country. Thus the power fell into the hands of the Social Democrats who with the co-operation of moderate Clericals took over the

administration of the new Austrian State—the little Austrian Republic.

When the Great War was over starvation stared the little Austrian Republic in the face. The surrounding new States, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Hungary following the law of self-preservation clung to what they had and refused to help Austria in any way. Naturally Austria looked towards the German Republic which came into being at the close of the war for support. Germany also was starving but her condition was not so bad as that of Austria. This was the time when the question of Anschluss cropped up. The demand for Anschluss, until then the monopoly of a handful of Pan Germans, became a popular cry. The demand for Anschluss was nothing but a desperate wail. When the little Republic found that her neighbours were determined to starve her to death she decided to join hands with the German Republic. The surrounding countries were alarmed at this move for they knew well that if Germany would acquire the rich resources of Austria and an additional population of six million people, she would have lost the war only to gain the peace, and would emerge, after some time, potentially far stronger, than ever. Again the Anschluss would throw open to Germany the gateway to the East. Such a development would not be a happy conclusion of the war from the point of view of the victor nations. Therefore the Entente States in consultation with the Western Powers decided to feed the Austrian Republic so that she might exist as a separate State. So Austrian relief-work began, and parallel with its progress the propaganda for Anschluss lost reality.

Even in 1933, when Germany came under the heel of Hitler, support for union with that country dwindled to an

insignificant minority of Austrians. Not only the Catholics who formed the Government and the Heimwehr-Fascists who supported them, but every one of the opponents of Government, including the Social-Democrats who regularly scored forty percent of the votes at elections, cried "No" to any idea of a union with Hitler Germany. This clearly points out that though Austria wanted to join Germany to save herself from starvation, she was not willing to sacrifice her freedom so long as she could exist as a prosperous and free nation.

By capturing power in Austria the Social Democrats were able to establish a Republican Government; to put it more plainly, they were able to set up a Parliamentary system of Government. The real power slipped into the hands of the Clericals, though the Socialists formed the largest single party in Parliament. They always remained in Opposition. The Social Democratic Party was led by Otto Bauer, the best brain then in Austria.

Ignaz Seipel, the prelate, became the first Chancellor of the Austrian Republic and held power in his own hands till the year 1929. Monsignore Seipel was the second best brain in Austria. He was more cunning and crafty than his contemporary, Otto Bauer. He was the political brain-centre of the Catholic Church. Though he observed rigid personal asceticism, he had overweening political ambitions. He showed relentless hostility towards his opponents, the Social-Democrats. This quality earned for him the title "The Cardinal Without Mercy". Among the Austrian masses he was known as "Autrichelieu", Austria's Richelieu.

From the beginning Autrichelieu was against the flower of the masses. He could not openly revolt against

Republican Defence Corps organised by the Socialists. Under the patronage of the Chancellor the Heimwehr grew to be a powerful military organisation to counteract the forces of Socialism in Austria.

When Mussolini established a Totalitarian State in Italy in 1923, the Heimwehr movement in Austria gained momentum. Though Mussolini had said more than once that Fascism was not an article of export, he was willing to help the Austrian reactionaries to crush the Socialists and their organisation. He supplied money for the arming of reaction in Austria. Fascism was a new experiment in Europe, and as such the eyes of all countries in Central Europe turned towards Italy to watch the leadership of Mussolini. The vociferous denunciation of the Versailles Treaty, the introduction of military training, the bombastic speech of the *Duce*, and the promise of an Empire to the Italian people, and a threat to the Soviet Union, all these convinced the rulers of the Balkan States that Italy under the leadership of Mussolini was becoming a power to be reckoned with in Europe. Again, ambitious politicians all over Europe desired to imitate the Italian dictator. In Austria, the Clericals who were deadly against the power of the masses, showed great enthusiasm in accepting the advice of Mussolini to put down 'Red Austria'. They supported, by men and money, the development of reactionary private armies in the country and were looking forward to the day when Austria would become a Fascist State under the dictatorship of a priest-politician. The Clericals had high hopes about Monsignore Seipel and certainly he did not fail them.

Monsignore Seipel collected around him political adventurers like Prince Starhemberg, Major Emil Fey, and encouraged them either to lead the Austrian—Fascists or

to organise private military bodies that would be useful to put down the power of the masses. Prince Starhemberg, who is now fighting Hitler from Britain's side, is a purely political adventurer and he was quite willing to help Dr. Seipel in his machinations against the masses of Austria.

Prince Starhemberg is an aristocratic, good-looking and very intelligent Austrian. He owned thirteen castles and had a standing private army known by the name "Jaeger Battalions". His life has a romantic background. It is said that when as a mere boy, he got himself mixed up in Adolf Hitler's "Beer-house Putsch" of 1923, and thus challenged death light-heartedly. In accepting the offer of Dr. Seipel he undertook the responsibility of conducting an armed revolt against the Socialist Party in Austria.

Major Emil Fey was a narrow-minded, courageous, ex-soldier, who organised the gangs of Vienna toughs and put them into grey uniforms to destroy the power of the masses. Another disgruntled lawyer, Dr. Welter Pfriemer, who was a Pan-German Austrian, raised a private army with the sole purpose of effecting a 'March on Vienna', just as Mussolini did in Rome, to pave a way for a Nazi dictatorship. This lawyer hoped not only to crush the power of the masses, but also to drive away the Catholics from the Government. In north Tyrol another private army came into being under the leadership of one Dr. Steidle. All these private armies constituted the strength of reaction in Austria, and it was with the assistance of these private armies that Mgr. Seipel decided to strike at 'Red Austria'. During the years when he held power in Austria he was trying to destroy the Republic. Though he could not achieve his object in his life time, his

disciples, Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss, and Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg completed the work he had left undone. In justice it must be said that Dr. Seipel's forerunners overdid the work the prelate set to them by sacrificing the freedom of their country.

The injustices meted out to the workers by the Seipel Government angered them. On many occasions they demonstrated against the Government, but the Government did not pay any attention to such things. Here it is to be remembered that although the Socialist Party was the largest party in the Austrian Parliament it was constantly kept out of office by the indomitable courage and great statesmanship of Seipel. He drove the Socialists into the opposition and held the reins of Government in his own hands.

The first major fight between the Socialists and the Reactionaries occurred in 1927. Early in July a Socialist procession was fired upon by the Heimwehr for no reason. On the 13th of July the offenders were brought to trial before a packed jury. But to the great surprise and humiliation of the masses, the offenders, or say the killers, were acquitted. This injustice resulted in mass demonstrations by the workers in the city of Vienna on the 15th of July. The workers infuriated by the class injustice shown them by the Government were bent upon retaliation. This again developed into a street fight between the masses and the Heimwehr. The Government, instead of suppressing the riots armed the Heimwehr and allowed them a free hand in dealing with the workers. The police stood by and watched the killing. This incident of July 15, was a great triumph for the forces of reaction. It also opened the eyes of the masses to the fact that the Austrian Government

was making headway to destroy the Parliamentary system of Government.

In 1929 Seipel was succeeded by Dr Johannes Schober as the Chancellor of Austria. Schober was a Pan German, and if he had lived he would have become a prominent Nazi. During his Chancellorship Nazi influence began to be felt more in Austria. Hitler had already sent his agents to Austria to organise a Nazi party there. Among the Heimwehr leaders there were differences. One sought the assistance of the German Nazis, another of the Italian Fascists, and still another of the Austrian Clericals. Thus as the years went by, the Nazi influence seemed to be rising while the the Fascist and Clerical influence seemed to be on the decrease. When the Schober Government fell after a few months of existence the Vaugoin Starhemberg Cabinet was formed. This Cabinet was Pro German and during this time Hitler made a serious attempt to capture power in the Austrian Parliament through the Austrian Nazi Party. Starhemberg was willing to help the German Nazi Leader, and he invited the German Putsch expert, Pabst to go to Austria to prepare the Heimwehr for staging a Nazi revolution. Unfortunately the plans were known earlier and the Western Powers issued a warning, which Vaugoin Starhemberg Cabinet dared not disregard. Thus Hitler's first attempt to annex Austria by means of a Nazi revolution failed.

In the 1932 election the Socialists again gained the largest number of seats in the Parliament. Also there was a difference between the Fascist and Nazi groups in the Heimwehr and it seemed that the reactionary Clerical Government would be forced to resign giving place to the Socialists to form the Government. The Socialists demanded a dissolution but the then Chancellor, Dr Buresch,

resigned, since he had actually postponed the motion for dissolution. The Chancellor's motive was to gain time to secure the support of the Heimwehr. Into the place of Dr Buresch stepped Engelbert Dollfuss as the Chancellor of the Austrian Republic.

### THE NAZI PUTSCH

When Dr Dollfuss became Chancellor, Austria was heading towards a financial bankruptcy. Therefore his first move was to secure a loan from the Western Powers. Although Germany was herself bankrupt and could not render any help to Austria she claimed the right to interfere in the affair. This set Dollfuss against Germany. The Western Powers granted the loan to Dollfuss and not to the Austrian Republic. If Britain and France had insisted that the loan would be granted only to the Austrian Republic and had reserved the right to intervene in the affairs of Austria as soon as that country changes the parliamentary system of Government Austria would have been saved. But the Western Powers did not deem it necessary to commit themselves in Central Europe. The Western Powers gave the loan Austria demanded and asked Mussolini to play the policeman in watching over Austrian independence.

This was a golden opportunity for the *Duce* to strike at the Socialists in Austria. He supplied Dollfuss with the necessary arms and plans to destroy the Austrian Republic. Dr Dollfuss was enamoured at the parental guidance of Mussolini and began the task set to him by the Italian dictator. In 1933 Dollfuss abolished the Parliament and became the dictator of Austria. Then he armed the Heimwehr and set to them the task of destroying the Socialists and their organisations. The Heimwehr responded excellently to the challenge of the Chancellor and his

frontier and seize the high ground beyond, the moment the Italians left the Brenner. Czechoslovakia was also prepared to rush her troops in the direction of Vienna to secure defensive position against a Nazi invasion. Hitler, when challenged by the combined forces of Italy, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia dared not go forward with his plan of invading Austria; but the Austrian Nazis carried out the Putsch which resulted in the death of Dr Dollfuss.

The Nazi Putsch of July 1934 did not succeed. The Putschists could do nothing more than entering the House of Parliament and killing Dollfuss. They could not capture power in Austria. They expected Hitler to invade Austria and make the Putsch a success. But Hitler could not invade Austria due to the opposition of the Italian dictator. Thus the second attempt of Hitler to annex Austria failed.

The Putschists were captured by the Government troops and were tried for high treason. The trial revealed the German complicity in the Putsch. It revealed more than that; it exposed the numerous German plots to destroy Austria, and also established the fact that the Nazi rising of July was not an isolated incident, but it was one directed from Berlin. All attempts by Germany to establish her innocence were futile. At the trial proofs were produced of a plot dated July 1933 for 20,000 Bavarian troops to march on Vienna in support of a Nazi rising. In October 1933 another Putsch plot was discussed in detail under the chairmanship of Rohm, one of the closest associates of Hitler, who was shot by Hitler himself in 1934.

#### THE TRAGEDY OF SCHUSCHNIGG

Kurt von Schuschnigg, who succeeded Dollfuss as the Chancellor of Austria, made a bold step to put down the

With the *Duce* to bring about a closer and firmer tie between the two countries, he was surprised and puzzled to hear Mussolini commanding him to settle with Germany. He suggested that the Austrian Chancellor should enter into a friendly agreement with Hitler and warned the Chancellor that if he resisted he would be left alone to defend his country against a Nazi invasion.

There was no alternative for the Austrian Chancellor. He submitted without even a protest, for he dared not gain the displeasure of the man who helped him to crush the Socialists and to make him dictator of Austria. Again, if Schuschnigg had resisted he would have only exposed his country to a Nazi, as well as a Fascist invasion. Under the circumstances Dr. Schuschnigg decided to appease the dictator and made himself ready for signing his and his country's death warrant.

The Austro-German Agreement was signed in the Spring of 1938. According to this agreement Germany agreed to recognise the mutual interests of the two Germanic States, Germany and Austria, and to put on record Germany's recognition of the sovereignty of Austria and her pledge that she would not interfere in Austria's internal affairs. At the same time Hitler wanted Dr. Schuschnigg to allow Nazi organisations to be started in Austria and lift the ban on his book *Mein Kampf*, the Nazi Bible, which contained bitter attacks on Austrian independence. Also, Dr. Schuschnigg was not to tolerate any criticism of the Hitler regime in any part of Austria on the platform or in the Press. Over and above all these conditions Dr. Schuschnigg was to take two prominent Nazis in his Cabinet. One was Dr. Gertl Schmidt, Foreign Secretary, who with Herr von Papen hurried Schuschnigg in February 1938 into the final disaster of the

visit to Hitler in Berchtesgaden. The other was Glas von Horstenau, who on March 11 1938 landed in Vienna from Berlin to bring to the Chancellor of the country to which he had taken an oath of loyalty an ultimatum from the Chancellor of Germany coupled with the intimation of the forthcoming invasion.

By accepting the terms of Hitler and taking the above mentioned two Nazis in his Cabinet Dr Schuschnigg decreed the doom of Austrian independence. The two Nazis entered the Cabinet not to help the Chancellor to protect his country, but to wreck the country making the the Chancellor a pawn in the game.

When we go back and make a minute examination of Austrian affairs, we cannot but come to the conclusion that the Austrian<sup>r</sup> Chancellors from Seipel down to Dr Schuschnigg murdered and imprisoned the masses to feed the Clericals and Fascists. By destroying the power of the masses which was represented by the Socialist Party, the Chancellors dug the grave of Austrian independence. If they had accepted the offer of the Socialists to defend th<sup>e</sup> country against a German aggression they would have been able to keep the Austrian flag flying in Vienna to day. The hatred of the masses who were the pillars of the country, and who formed the majority of the population, drove the Clerical Chancellors into the Fascist camp, and thus hurried them and their little country towards their doom.

And what was the British Government doing about all these?

Let no one think that the National Government of Britain did nothing. Mr Eden presented his famous questionnaire to Germany, asking Hitler the most embarrassing questions about his intentions towards Austria.

Hitler had the audacity to tell the British Government that Dr. Schuschnigg had only signed a gentleman's agreement with him and that he was not going to do anything further in the matter. Strangely enough the British Government was quite satisfied with the answer of the German Chancellor. The German Chancellor really seemed to have been embarrassed by the impudent questions of Mr. Eden and must have asked the British Premier to remove Mr. Eden from the Foreign Office. Mr. Chamberlain assured Hitler that he would see to that the Fuhrer's request was granted. Of course, Mr. Chamberlain kept his word. for Mr. Eden was forced to resign shortly after his questioning Hitler.

Now events moved rapidly in Austria. Under the protection afforded by the 1936 Agreement, Nazi organisations sprang up like mushrooms in Austria, and thousands of people joined them. Even among the police there was a good number of Nazis. Besides, the Nazi Cabinet Ministers did everything in their power to encourage and help the Nazis to openly revolt against the Austrian Government. These Nazi Ministers gave their comrades in Austria to understand that the Austro-German agreement was nothing more than a trick to hide the real motives of Germany. They said that Hitler was planning an invasion and when the time would come they should be ready to play their part. Such encouraging advices emboldened the Austrian Nazis to openly set at naught the laws of the Austrian Government. The Nazi salute was no more a secret, the Swastika armlets and banners appeared everywhere, and the Nazi parades began to be more frequent than before.

It seems that Dr. Schuschnigg had failed to understand the men who surrounded him. He seemed to trust the two Nazi ministers in his Cabinet. He failed to notice that they

were under the pay of Hitler and were secretly plotting to betray him. When he found that the Austrian Nazis were exceeding the limits in their anti-Austrian activities he seemed to realise the reality of the situation. Though it was a little too late he determined to put down the Nazi menace with an iron hand. He issued a clarion call to the 'Fatherland Front', the only reliable defence organisation in the country under the Chancellor's direct control to help him to put down the Nazi rioters. The 'Fatherland Front' responded cheerfully to the call of the leader and was able to put down the Nazis. Now Hitler, through his agents in Austria, instructed his Austrian subjects to lie low for some time. These instructions were carried out to the very letter and for some time it seemed that Dr. Schuschnigg had for once acted wisely.

Hitler is not a man to be so easily defeated. He had already made his plans for annexing Austria. He had also laid a trap for Schuschnigg. Now he began to work exploiting to the full the Austrian Chancellor's weak point—his Catholicism. Hitler sent Herr von Papen the most intriguing politician the Earth has ever produced, and commanded him to bring Dr. Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden. Von Papen had known Hitler too well to oppose or disobey his orders. He knew that if he failed to bring the head of Schuschnigg to Hitler, he would lose his instead. Thus having no other alternative but to obey the vilest hypocritical politician of the world set to dig the grave of Schuschnigg and Austrian independence.

Meanwhile Dr. Schuschnigg had discovered the famous Tatz Plan. When the police raided a Nazi Party office in January 1938, a document under the signature of Rudolf Hess, the Fuhrer's deputy, was found. The document revealed a plan for the overthrow of the Austrian

Government by the Nazis. The document contained instructions from Rudolf Hess to Leopold and Taus, two notorious Austrian Nazis, to the effect that early in April they should begin setting the law at defiance. They were to start employing the forbidden Nazi salute, should hoist the Swastika banners, should wear the Swastika armlets, and should seize public buildings as part of a general Putsch. The Austrian Nazis were also given to understand that in the meanwhile Hitler would order a huge army to march to the Austrian border on the pretext of holding manoeuvres. He would wait for the first opportunity to see one Austrian Nazi wounded in Austrian soil when he would invade that country under the excuse of stopping "German people killing Germans."

Dr Schuschnigg was determined to expose the Taus Plan to the world, but Hitler brought to bear tremendous pressure on the Austrian Chancellor with the result that the document was temporarily suppressed and a silly story was given out. It was at this critical moment Von Papen came to Vienna with fresh instructions from Hitler. Von Papen told Dr Schuschnigg that Hitler was much embarrassed regarding the Taus Plan and he desired to have a friendly talk with him to settle the differences between the two German States and that he wanted to assure personally his determination to respect Austria's independence as agreed in 1936. Dr. Schuschnigg could not believe Von Papen, but his close friend Guido Schmidt, Austria's Foreign Minister, reinforced Papen's argument, by telling the Chancellor, whom he was betraying, that he should not miss that golden opportunity to meet Hitler in person and settle all the differences between them. He also added that a personal heart to heart talk with the Great German Leader would enable him to establish a

closer and lasting relation between the two German States. The Austrian Chancellor was easily deceived into believing his Foreign Minister. Now he decided upon the fatal course of visiting Hitler in Berchtesgaden.

On Saturday, February 12th, 1938 Dr. Schuschnigg accompanied by Von Papan and his Foreign Minister went to interview Hitler. His mind was not quite at ease. He informed Great Britain, Italy and France about the projected journey two days before, but he was told by all those three nations that he was the best judge of Austrian affairs and that he would be a better judge of all his actions. This meant nothing but letting the little Republic to be devoured by the Nazi dragon. Thus when Dr. Schuschnigg found that he was completely isolated and that he could depend upon no big European Power to assist him against a Nazi aggression, he decided that it was better to meet the Führer and settle the issue once for all.

As soon as the Austrian Chancellor crossed the border he found the German Army engaged in warlike preparations. This made him guess that nothing would prevent Hitler from crossing the border and marching into his country if he would not yield to his demands. However, he was determined not to sacrifice the independence of his country; he was prepared to resist and give battle if the worst happened.

Schuschnigg was let to cool his heels for a while before he was ushered into the anti-room of the German Chancellor. On entering the room Schuschnigg encountered a 'madman, working himself to a frenzy. Hitler greeted the Austrian Chancellor with accusations. He told Schuschnigg that he was mistreating and starving thousands of Germans in Austria, and he, as the Greatest German ever born, on the

earth and as the leader of all the Germans on all the corners of the world would not tolerate the denial of ordinary human rights to the Austrian Germans. He thundered, threatened, and wailed while the Austrian Chancellor stood stupefied at the strange behavior of the Great German Leader.

Without explaining his conduct to the Austrian Chancellor the German Chancellor asked one of his military chiefs to acquaint the Austrian with his plan. The military officer conducted Schuschnigg to an adjoining room and showed him his plans for the invasion of Austria. The humiliating treatment meted out to him by Hitler and the threatened invasion of his country broke down the courage of Schuschnigg. He was tortured mentally and physically and was reduced to a state of complete breakdown. Now he was ushered into the presence of Hitler a second time, when the German Chancellor commanded him to sign a document which was nothing but an ultimatum. The ultimatum contained eleven clauses. Schuschnigg agreed to three of them and refused to accept the remaining eight on the ground that he had no power to violate the Constitution of his country. Hitler being satisfied that Dr. Schuschnigg would no longer resist his demands allowed him to depart to his country giving him three days time to induce the President of the Austrian Republic, Dr. Miklas to accept his terms. Thus Schuschnigg returned home a broken man.

The three clauses accepted by Schuschnigg were the appointing of a Nazi to the Ministry of the Interior and Home Security proclaiming a general amnesty to all Nazis and permitting the Nazis to enroll in the Fatherland Front. By yielding to these vital conditions Schuschnigg sacrificed the freedom of his country.

Dr. Miklas was forced under the threat of German invasion to accept all the other clauses of the ultimatum.

In accordance with the Berchtesgaden Agreement Schuschnigg appointed Seyss Inquart a prominent Nazi as the Minister of the Interior and Home Security. This man who was a secret agent of the German Chancellor allowed the Nazis in the provinces to capture power by force. He instructed the police to assist the Nazis in the overthrow of the Republic. By allowing the Nazis to enter the Fatherland Front Schuschnigg destroyed the only Defence force in the country. By proclaiming general amnesty to the Nazis, the Austrian Chancellor let loose the forces of rebellion in the State. He did all these fully believing that Hitler would announce to the whole world in his forthcoming Reichstag speech that he fully recognised the independence of Austria. Schuschnigg was greatly disappointed when he found that Hitler had not made any reference to Austria's independence in his speech. On the other hand the German Chancellor said that there was no geographical boundary between the two German States, Germany and Austria. He also told the Austrian Nazis that the time was not distant when they would be absorbed in the Reich. Hitler's Reichstag speech besides shattering all the hopes of the Austrian Chancellor made him realise the fact that Hitler was bent upon annexing Austria at any cost. Knowing fully well that Austria stood alone in that grave hour of her history he decided to hold a plebiscite on the question of his country's joining Germany. Though he was surrounded by traitors the Austrian Chancellor was able to conceal his plebiscite project to the last.

Meanwhile Hitler had demanded the resignation of Seyss Inquart and the appointment of a Nazi Chancellor.

Instead. President Miklas refused to submit to the threat of Hitler. He told Schuschnigg to announce the plebiscite as early as possible. Before announcing the plebiscite Dr. Schuschnigg consulted the Socialist leaders who showed willingness to forget all the injustices done them by the Government and to stand firm by the Chancellor for defending their country. If the Austrian Chancellor had co-operated with the Socialists and accepted their help a few years earlier he could have saved his country's freedom.

The announcement of the plebiscite came as a bolt from the blue to Hitler. He never expected Schuschnigg to consult the people in the matter of Anschluss, and he did not want the people of Austria to decide their fate. Hitler commanded Schuschnigg to cancel the plebiscite: at the same time he ordered his army to enter Austria. Thus on the night of 11th March 1938 the Nazi troops entered Austria. There was no resistance, for the Austrian Chancellor had ordered people to take their misfortune calmly and avoid blood shed by opposing a superior army.

At last Hitler had annexed Austria. He triumphantly marched through the city of Vienna while his Storm Troops beat the Clericals, Socialists and Jews. The Republic was abolished and Austria was absorbed in the Reich. Austria had fallen, Hitler had won his first victory. The British were not interested in the affairs of Austria, while France was indifferent. Italy had allowed Hitler a free hand. Thus the Republic was betrayed.

When the Nazi troops entered Austria, Dr. Schuschnigg was arrested by Austria's Minister for the Interior and Home Security, and made prisoner. The Chancellor was kept in his own residence surrounded and guarded by the Storm Troops. When the Gestapo took charge of the

internal affairs of Austria the Chancellor was handed over to the Gestapo Chief for safe keeping. Now it is known to the world that Dr. Schuschnigg is undergoing torture in the notorious Dachau Concentration Camp in Germany. This is the reward the Chancellor got for betraying the Austrian masses to the Nazis.

### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

After the fall of Austria Hitler directed his attention to the annexation of Czechoslovakia. This little Republic barred his way to Eastern Europe. From military point of view this country afforded the key to the domination of Europe. The importance of Czechoslovakia was recognised by the Germans even in the days of Bismarck. He said 'He who controls Bohemia controls Europe'. No one realised the truth of this remark more than Hitler. And a Czechoslovakia dominated Bohemia. Hitler wanted to annex that country by hook or crook. He knew fully well that without the natural boundaries of the Sudeten Alps, he would not be able to command the Danube Basin. A glance at the physical map of Europe will reveal the geographical importance of Czechoslovakia in Central Europe. The Alps Mountains stretching out from Switzerland to the Sudetenland and the Carpathians and the Alps of Transylvania form a barrier against any German invasion of Bohemia. Therefore it would not be possible for Hitler to realise his dream of dominating the whole of Europe and carving out a German Empire out of the large territory of Russia without acquiring the key position afforded by the Czechoslovak Republic. He had already arranged for establishing a Nazi Party in the Sudetenland as early as 1930.

The Czechoslovak Republic was created as a bastion against a probable German advance towards the East. But

the victors of the Great War made a serious mistake in including a large population of Germans in the new Republic. These Germans though they were compelled to live under the Czechoslovak Government, never showed loyalty to that Government. They waited for the revival of German power in Europe to denounce their Czechoslovak citizenship and return to their fatherland. The birth of the Nazi Party in Germany encouraged the Sudeten Germans to look towards that party for help and guidance. At first they organised themselves privately and professed loyalty to the Republic. But with the growth of the Nazi power in Germany the nuisance value of the Sudeten Germans increased. When Nazi dictatorship was established in Germany the Sudeten German Party came into being. It was organised and conducted by Konrad Heule. He was an agent of Hitler but he was a good actor too. By profession he was an athlete and a bank clerk. He collected round him a large number of young men whose acquaintance he made at the various athletic clubs and gave them the uniform similar to the one worn by the S. S. men in Nazi Germany. These young men acted as the Storm Troops of the Sudeten German Party.

Czechoslovakia had little trouble from the German minority before the coming of Hitler to power in Germany. The German National Party existed, but it was co-operating with the Czechs and Slovaks in the administration of the Republic. The Germans were represented in Parliament and enjoyed all the rights accorded to a Czech citizen. Journalists of great reputation who had visited the Sudeten area found that the German minority enjoyed more privileges than any other minority community in any other country in the world. They said that the Czechs treated them very fairly and that there was no reason for the

Germans to comply against the Czechoslovakian Government. On the authority of these journalists it can be said that the German minority itself did not feel that it was oppressed or tortured by the Czechs. But the coming of Hitler to power in Germany changed everything.

The Goebbels-propaganda machine began to give out false stories about the atrocities of the Czechs against the Sudeten Germans. The famous whispering propaganda of Goebbels made the British people believe that the German minority problem in Czechoslovakia was assuming international importance and that the British Government should exert its influence to bring about an early settlement of the matter if there should be peace in Europe. The propaganda succeeded in impressing the British public that it would be a matter of a couple of weeks for the German military machine to walk over the Czechoslovak Republic. It seems that under the magic influence of Goebbels's propaganda British people entirely forgot the fact that Czechoslovakia was the most militarised nation in Central Europe. She possessed the best armament factory in all Europe and consequently was called the Arsenal of Europe. According to the German estimate Czechoslovakia possessed 600 tanks, 1500 planes, 10,000 air personnel and an army of 200,000 fully trained men, 1,000,000 men in the First Reserve, and 300,000 in the Second Reserve. Besides, Czechoslovakia's mechanised units of all kinds were considered to be the most modern in Europe. But strangely enough the men in power in Britain did not give this country a chance to defend her liberty against the wanton outrage of Nazism. Over and above this, they exerted the utmost pressure on the little Republic to concede all the demands of Hitler made through his agent Henlein.

Henlein aped his master excellently well. He played fast and loose with the Czechs. First he would put forth certain demands before the Government, and when the Government showed willingness to concede all the demands, he would provoke some rioting and consequently would refuse to accept the concessions offered by the Government on the ground of maltreatment of the Sudeten Germans by the Czech police. Then he would run to Germany to consult Hitler, and from there he would proceed to England to play on the feelings of the pro Nazi M. P. For nearly five years Henlein played his game and that too with advantage to his aims. His modest behaviour, though it was cleverly feigned, impressed the British politicians, and they jumped to the conclusion that Henlein demanded nothing more than self-determination for the Sudeten Germans within the Czechoslovak Constitution. No doubt, there were a few Britons like Mr. Winston Churchill who fully knew the real facts. These people knew that Hitler was using the Sudeten Germans as a pawn to annex Czechoslovakia, and these men proved to be in the right in the end.

After the annexation of Austria, Hitler began to despatch a large number of troops to the Czechoslovak border. He had already given a hint about his intentions in his Reichstage speech just before the annexation of Austria. Hitler said that his intention was to liberate 10 000,000 oppressed German subjects of neighbouring States, and everyone knew that this meant that he had determined sooner or later to treat Czechoslovakia as he had treated Austria.

This speech brought forth a new development in Czechoslovakia. Konrad Henlein came into the open, and

throwing off his mask announced his famous Karlsbad Programme. This programme demanded nothing short of an independent Sudeben German dictatorship in the Sudeten areas with the choice to unite with the Third Reich when ever the Sudeben Germans approved of such a move. Henlein announced this programme on April 24 1938 and the Czechoslovak Government promptly replied through the Foreign Minister that Czechoslovakia rejected Henlein's demands but was willing to make 'every concession except such as would minimise our sovereignty and endanger the security of the State and its present frontiers.

The Czechoslovak Government knew the intentions of Hitler. So they were prepared to defend their country against German invasion. They kept their military machine ready for any emergency and fully relied upon their Allies the French the British and the Russians to help them to defend the freedom of their country against a Nazi invasion.

The announcement of Henlein's demands was welcomed in Germany with fanatic Nazi enthusiasm while in England and France it was considered a sign of Hitler's next move. Mr Chamberlain did not comment on the rejection of the demands by the Czechoslovak Government. He stuck to his statement on March 24th just after the annexation of Austria, that a Central European war might well involve Great Britain. France emphatically stated that she would honour her treaties with Czechoslovakia and would go to the assistance of that country if she were to be invaded by Germany. Soviet Russia also stated her firm determination to assist the Czechs were no doubt perturbed at the reluctance of Britain to clarify her stand towards the Republic. They knew that the British Premier was pro Nazis and followed a policy of appeasement of the

German Chancellor. They also feared that Mr. Chamberlain would bring pressure upon France to dishonour her treaties and to back out when the time would come to defend the freedom of the Czechs. The events that followed proved that the Czechs were completely correct in judging the attitude of the Chamberlain Government.

It seems to me that Mr. Chamberlain must have been obsessed by the idea of fighting for the freedom of the Czechs shoulder to shoulder with the Soviets. The melancholy prospect of shaking hands with the Communists whom he seemed to have hated most, must have driven Mr. Chamberlain to the Fascist camp. It is evident that Mr. Chamberlain wanted a victory for Hitler at least to use him against Stalin. Hitler knowing fully well the deep dislike of the British people for Communism, exploited their anti-Communist feeling to the fullest advantage to force them to bring undue pressure on the Czechs to concede all the demands of Henlein.

In May the Nazi troops began to move towards the Czechoslovak border. President Benes summoned a conference of the Supreme Defence Council and of the Cabinet to decide the next move of the Government. Unanimous agreement was reached in the matter and immediate mobilisation was decided upon. The Czechoslovak army manned the frontiers and was ready to give battle. This stopped Hitler from marching further. He was not willing to precipitate a European war, in which he would be challenged by the coalition of the British, the French, the Russian, and the Czechoslovak forces. Hitler knew that the Czechoslovak war machine was capable of holding at bay the mighty and superior German forces for a few months and in the meantime the Communists would descend from Russia to wreck their vengeance on the leader

of the 'anti-Communist' movement. Hitler was obviously afraid of Stalin and did not like to come to grips with him.

It seems that Hitler's move in ordering his army to march towards the Czechoslovak border was to frighten the British Government with a European war. In this he succeeded. Mr Chamberlain was really alarmed. Sir Neville Henderson, British Ambassador in Berlin, confirmed the movement of German troops and added that if Hitler was not checked a European war would be imminent. Mr Chamberlain had already decided his attitude towards the Republic. He had determined to sacrifice the freedom of the Czechs to appease the Nazi dictator. Now he began bullying the Czechs to yield to Hitler's demands.

The now famous "Cliveden Set" luncheon party revealed Mr. Chamberlain's plan to betray the Czechoslovak Republic. Mr Chamberlain gave an interview to American journalists at Lady Astor's luncheon party. The account of the interview published in the newspapers revealed the fact that Mr Chamberlain was planning a Four Power conference to betray the Czechoslovak Republic. The interview made the public of the world understand that the British people were not prepared to fight for the Czechs and the Czechs would do well to accede to the German demands. It seems that Mr Chamberlain advised the Czechs to welcome a Nazi annexation of the Sudeten German areas. Though Mr. Chamberlain neither denied nor accepted the press reports he had undoubtedly given Hitler a hint of the attitude of the British Government towards the Czechs.

Now Chamberlain sent Lord Runciman to Czechoslovakia on a good will mission. It will be more correct to say that Lord Runciman was imposed upon the Czechs to persuade them to yield to the demands of Hitler. Perhaps

Lord Runciman was purposely sent to make a report favouring the Sudeten German's demands. The report, published by Lord Runciman points out the necessity of the Czechs coming to terms with Henlein by conceding all his demands. Runciman must have definitely told the President of the Czechoslovak Republic that the British Premier wanted him to settle terms with Hitler to secure peace in Europe. Under the pressure exerted through Lord Runciman fresh negotiations began between the Czech Government and the Henleinists. The talks always broke off when the Government was about to concede the demands. The talks would resume only to hear Mr Henlein putting forth more and fresh demands. In reality Henlein did not want to settle terms with the Czechoslovak Government. He was exploiting to the full the British pressure to exact as much concession as possible and then to break off the talks to announce his determination to invite Hitler to absorb the Sudeten Germans in the Third Reich.

While the talks proceeded under the patronising influence of Lord Runciman (patronising to the Henleinists) Hitler was preparing for the invasion of Czechoslovakia. This time he seemed to be in earnest and it seemed that the danger that threatened in May had returned in September. In the first week of September the Henleinists broke off negotiations and refused to return to discuss matter before Hitler's speech was scheduled for 12th September. Now things took a different turn. Lord Runciman returned home with the impression that the affairs were in God's hands. The Henleinists began to provoke clashes between the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans. The Government took strong measures to prevent the outbreak of rioting and street fighting. The fate of Czechoslovakia seemed to hang on the words of Hitler. Everyone was waiting for the German Chancellor to speak at Nuremberg.

Hitler's Nuremberg speech did not declare war on Czechoslovakia. Hitler abused President Benes and the Czech people and told them that they were criminals. He repeated his old story of atrocities and maltreatment of the Sudeten Germans by the Czechs. Did Herr Hitler cry to express his sorrow for the tortured brethren? Perhaps he might have. But he certainly incited the Henleinists to revolt against the Czechoslovak Government. Through his speech he sounded the trumpet call for aggression. Thus began Hitler's second aggression.

As soon as the speech was over the Henleinists came out in the streets of Prague and began to capture important buildings, post and telegraph offices etc. The Nazi salute, the Swastika flag and the 'Heil Hitler' slogans played their part. The Nazi Putsch in Czechoslovakia lasted for three days, and then it was crushed by the Government. The timely action of the Government checked Hitler's march into the country. The rapid mobilisation of the war machine and the preparedness of the Czechs to every man to fight Nazi aggression opened the eyes of the world to the efficiency and courage of the Czechs. The firm stand taken by the Czechs demonstrated the fact that Hitler's boast to walk over Czechoslovakia would be put to the test. Even Hitler surprised at the spartan courage of the Czechs had to call a halt to his armies. Thus the threatened invasion did not happen—now for the second time.

The one man in Europe who was most perturbed by the iron will of the Czech people to fight for their freedom against heavy odds was Mr Chamberlain. In the action of the Czechs he perceived the approach of the second European war. It was not the war that frightened Mr Chamberlain but the inevitable hand shake with Stalin.

which a European war would bring. Perhaps the ghost of Communism must have tormented him as the ghost of Banco d d Macbeth. Or perhaps Mr Chamberlain must have welcomed the new developments as it would only help him to dismember Czechoslovakia according to plan. Whatever it may be, Mr Chamberlain telegraphed to Herr Hitler to grant him an audience. The Fuhrer was only too willing to receive the British Prime Minister. Will Hitler lose the opportunity of dictating to the premier of the mightiest Empire of the world? Again the British Premier's visit to his home will give him another trump card to be played before the weaker nations of Europe and it will also increase the prestige of the German Nation. Above all Mr Chamberlain's projected visit to his home convinced Hitler that Britain would not fight for Czechoslovakia.

On September 15th the British Premier flew to Berchtesgaden to meet the German Chancellor. A huge crowd had collected at the aerodrome to see the Premier off. When the Premier departed the crowd cried to him 'Stand by the Czechs'. When the British Premier reached Munich he was told by the German officials that Henlein had demanded the 'union of Sudeten areas with the Reich'. This was the latest development caused by the knowledge that Britain was going to let down the Czechs to save Europe from a world war. The British Premier was well received by the Fuhrer, but he was told point blank that Hitler would risk a world war rather than allow the Sudeten Aryans to suffer at the hands of the non-Aryan Czechs. Hitler told the British Premier that all arrangements were complete for the annexation of Czechoslovakia but he would not take that drastic step if the British Government could compel the Czechs to accede self-determin-

on the Sudeten Germans in the sense that they would be free to return to the Reich if they desired. He further said that if the Sudeten Germans could not achieve their object he would lend them his advice and the use of the German military machine. Hitler expressed his willingness to find other ways and means of carrying out the plan of liberating the Sudeten Germans without war if Mr Chamberlain could compel the Czechs to accept the principle of granting self-determination to the Sudeten Germans.

Mr Chamberlain returned to London the next day and called a Cabinet meeting. After discussing Hitler's ultimatum—Hitler's terms for peace in Europe amounted to an ultimatum—the British Cabinet decided to sacrifice the Czechoslovak Republic to buy peace from Hitler. On September 15 the French Premier, M Daladier and the French Foreign Minister M Bonnet were invited to London to discuss the Berchtesgaden ultimatum. Mr Chamberlain was able to convince the Head of the French Government of the absolute necessity of sacrificing the Czechs to the name of peace. M Daladier and M Bonnet readily consented to cooperate with Britain in betraying Czechoslovakia. The result was that the Berchtesgaden ultimatum was forwarded to the Czechs for unconditional acceptance.

The Anglo-French proposals were rejected by the Czech Cabinet on the ground that it was not practicable to give self-determination to the Sudeten Germans without the loss of territory and the loss of Sudeten area with its natural and mechanised fortifications would be detrimental to the very existence of the Czechoslovak Nation. They further said that the case for Czechoslovakia was prepared without the consent of that nation. The Czechs

fully knew the consequences of their rejection of the Anglo French Proposals yet they were ready to play their last card

We Indians can easily understand the situation of Czechoslovakia. Do we accept a Constitution imposed upon us by our rulers? We demand that our rulers should consult us before drafting a Constitution for our country. In the same way the Czechs wanted the Great Western Powers Britain and France, to consult them before asking them to sacrifice their freedom to give freedom to the world.

The rejection of the proposals by the Czech Government must have angered both Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier. In reply to the note expressing inability to accept the proposals, the Western Powers sent an ultimatum to the Republic demanding unconditional acceptance of the proposals. The Anglo French note said that if the Czechoslovak Government rejected the proposals and thereby precipitated a European war she would solely be held responsible for the war and that Britain and France would not assist her. It meant desertion as an alternative to yielding to Hitler. Under the threat of desertion Czechoslovakia accepted the Anglo French Proposals thereby paving the way to Munich.

When Mr Chamberlain went to Germany—this time to Godesberg—to communicate to Hitler that Czechoslovakia had accepted his terms, Hitler handed over to him an ultimatum bearing a time limit. Hitler, while emphasising the point that he wanted to be friends with England and that he had no other territorial ambition once the Sudeten question was solved, presented him with the ultimatum which demanded the immediate Czech evacuation on

and German occupation of the Sudeten Districts by October 1. Mr Chamberlain was not prepared for such a situation still he mustered courage to ask the German Chancellor if he would guarantee the future frontiers of the Republic. Hitler replied that he could not commit himself to any such thing so long as Czechoslovakia failed to satisfy the claims of Poland and Hungary, and even then the new Czechoslovakia should be jointly protected by all the nations of Europe. Mr Chamberlain was surprised to find himself in the most perplexing situation and thinking that his mission had failed returned to London. He communicated Prague the terms of Godesburg ultimatum and also added, in his note, that Britain could no longer advise the Republic not to protect her frontiers.

It seemed that there was still a little ray of hope for the Czechs. They thought that Britain and France would assist them when Hitler would actually invade their country. With this hope the country was prepared to the last man to fight the Nazis. The immediate and complete mobilisation of Czechoslovakia gave the impression to the world that the Democracies would fight for the freedom of the Czechs and that German aggression of Czechoslovakia would start the second European War. Today, the second world war is raging in Europe but it started only after the betrayal of Czechoslovakia.

Though Mr Chamberlain was crest fallen at the failure of his peace mission he did not completely give up hope. He attempted once again to appeal to the German Chancellor to moderate his terms. It was Mr Chamberlain's last attempt to 'save peace'. On the evening of September 28, Mr Chamberlain informed Prague that the following day a Conference of the four great European powers would be held.

at Munich when the Czechoslovak question would be finally solved. After his failure at Godesberg Mr. Chamberlain persuaded Hitler to hold a Conference of the Big Four to settle the Sudeten question and Hitler readily consented.

On September 29 the Conference was held at Munich. Hitler, Mussolini, Daladier and Chamberlain met in Conference to dismember Czechoslovakia. The Conference ended with the acceptance by France and Britain all the demands embodied in Hitler's Godesberg ultimatum.

Thus the doom of the Czechoslovak Nation was decreed at Munich. Czechoslovakia was duly asked to demobilise and surrender the Sudeten areas to Germany without a moment's delay. The Czech people found themselves challenged by the might of Britain, France, Italy, and Germany. They knew that their friends had betrayed them but what could they do? They surrendered in humiliation. As designed in the Godesberg ultimatum German occupation of Sudeten Districts began on October 1.

The Munich Peace was hailed as a saviour of the world and Mr. Chamberlain was hailed as the greatest Peace maker of our times. 'Today, when the heart of London experiences the heaviest air bombing by the Nazi planes, we realise the exact value of the peace that Munich brought.

Munich served as a stepping stone to annex Czechoslovakia. Once he entered the territory of the Republic, Hitler began his campaign of blaming the Czechs for everything. In a short time he was able to divide the country into two parts ruled by two Governments. One was the Czech Government, and the other, the Slovak

Government. Thus he effected the dismemberment of the state. He helped the Poles to get a small share in the booty to force a war on them a few months later. When Czechoslovakia was mutilated and was stripped off all her previous military strength Hitler annexed the whole country. On March 16, 1939 Hitler annexed Czechoslovakia under the excuse that the 'corrupt Republic' was nothing but an outpost of Bolshevism and that she was once again harassing the Aryan people in contravention of the Munich Pact.

Thus ended Hitler's undeclared war.

# Hitler's War

## (PART II)

### MUNICH STARTED THE WAR

In the first week of the Second World War the whole world was thrown into a dilemma. A new era of misery crashed down upon Europe. This set the people of the world thinking about the cause and purposes of the war. It is generally believed that Germany was trying to regain her old possessions and that Hitler was fighting to remove the injustice done to Germany by the Versailles Treaty. Hitler, the most dynamic revolutionary the world has ever set eyes upon, has told in his book *Mein Kampf* that he has come to the world as a great leader of the German people to conquer the world. His assertion that the Germans are the only Aryan race born to rule all other tribes and races was ignored or mistaken for a slogan to capture power in Germany. In England he was considered to be a clever demagogue manoeuvring for power. The English politicians dismissed *Mein Kampf* as a propaganda book and did not take Hitler seriously. They thought that Nazism was not so great a menace as Bolshevism. This fear of Bolshevism made the British politicians encourage Hitler's regime in Germany. The British hoped to satisfy Hitler's demands at the expense of the small States bordering Germany and this policy was followed by the British pacifist politicians till their pacifism attempted to strangle them.

Since 1933 the British committed mistakes in pursuant to an appeasement policy. They thought that Hitler would be satisfied with Rhineland, Austria, Sudetenland, and Danzig. But Hitler was playing a cunning game of

placating the pacifists in England. Every time he blackmailed a weak State he declared that he had no quarrel with France and England and he wanted only a 'living space' in Europe. Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier considered Hitler's demands just and allowed him to have his own way in Europe. At Munich Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier sold "Europe's arsenal" to Hitler. Czechoslovakia was not simply a small Republic in Europe. It was the most strategic part of Europe from a conqueror's point of view. It was the gate-way to the Balkans and the Near East. With her natural boundaries, her sturdy fighting people and her world famous armament works, Czechoslovakia obstructed Hitler's passage to the East. Because of her friendly pacts with France and Soviet Russia, this little Republic could not be invaded without bringing the might of France and Russia into the battle-field. England would be following France and thus Germany would be encircled. Hitler deceived Mr. Chamberlain and lured him into the trap he had prepared at Munich. The pacifist Premier of England, who dreaded Bolshevism more than Nazism, signed Czechoslovakia's death warrant at Munich. This broke the last bastion of democracy in Central Europe, this antagonised France and Russia; and this left Czechoslovakia without a friend in the world. If there had been no Munich Hitler would not have declared war on Poland.

#### THE AFTERMATH OF MUNICH

The annexation of Czechoslovakia by Hitler made the world realise the fact that the German Dictator had once for all thrown to the winds the moral theory that he preached so long and had embarked on an undisguised imperialist policy. The Hitler justified his conquest of Czechoslovakia in the following terms in his Weizsaecker

speech. He said: "In the seizure of Czechoslovakia, Nazi Germany, has for the first time substituted the idea of "*Lebensraum*". This view was shared and supported by all the other Nazi leaders. The rape of Czechoslovakia convinced the Democracies that it would be a mistake to continue the policy of appeasement any more. The destruction of the liberty of the Czechs, more than anything else, betrayed the real intention of the Nazi leader. At last the cat was out of the bag. Hitler had thrown off the mask and had come out in the open in his true colours. He had declared at the top of his voice that the German people under his leadership were marching toward the establishment of a Greater Germany, and that they were going to prove the superiority of the Aryan race over the other non-Aryan people. Hitler now assumed the role of a conqueror. This was evident from the way in which he was hailed by his people when he marched through the streets of Prague. His followers called him "Conqueror". Thus, under the guise of protecting the German people from the cruelty of non Germans he was hatching his plan of world domination to be achieved by threats, blackmail, and brutal assaults with the assistance of the mighty German military machine. One who has studied the Nazi Bible '*Mein Kampf*' can expect nothing better. Hitler's successes proved beyond doubt that he was living, or say beginning to live, his book. In his book he has said in unmistakable phrases that the German people will carve out an Empire, which in Hitler's phrase mean *Lebensraum* (living space), from Central Europe and Russia. He also said that the German people should live as a powerful nation; they should acquire colonies and this could be done by demanding self-determination for the German minority all over the world. If one remembers the nature of the self determination

used by Hitler for the Sudeten Germans one can easily understand that Hitler was planning the conquest of the whole world under the guise of protecting the German minority all over the globe.

The conquest of Czechoslovakia made Germany stronger than before economically and militarily. Germany acquired the most modern and strong fortifications of Czechoslovakia. She got the vast natural resources of minerals, metals and foodstuffs which she most urgently needed. The best acquisition was Europe's best equipped, though small war machine and 'arsenal'. Again the conquest of Czechoslovakia destroyed the most powerful bastion in Central Europe which otherwise would have stopped Hitler's drive to the East. Over and above this Hitler robbed the wealth of the country and yoked the thousands of unemployed to the wheel of his war machinery. He forced the brave Czechs to labour in the factories and fields to produce the requirements of the German Army.

After shocking the world with the rape of Czechoslovakia Hitler stopped to gain his 'breathing space' before making the next move. He was also waiting to watch the reaction his conquest would produce in the democratic countries.

On the eve of the rape of Czechoslovakia Mr Chamberlain the British Prime Minister, pledged support to Poland in the event of Nazi aggression. In his speech in the House of Commons on the 31st of March 1939, Neville Chamberlain said "In the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with her national forces His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all the support in their power."

Similarly Britain guaranteed the independence of Rumania, Greece and Turkey. No doubt it was a commitment nearly impossible of achievement without the help and co-operation of Soviet Russia, and Soviet Russia was always a doubtful adherent. Still, however the Western Powers made an attempt to win the Bolsheviks over to their side. The 'Peace Front' headed by Britain and France was formed and Rumania, Greece and Turkey were roped in. If Britain were to fulfil her pledges to Poland she must make Russia defend Poland from the East. With the disappearance of Czechoslovakia from the map of Central Europe neither France nor Britain would be able to give any direct help to Poland in the event of Nazi aggression.

The Western Powers began negotiations with Soviet Russia and it seemed that it was possible to bring that country into the 'Peace Front'. The Allied diplomatic as well as military missions went to Moscow and discussion continued. This move by the Democracies frightened Hitler with the necessity of fighting on two fronts in case Russia joined the 'Peace Front'. The German propaganda machine gave out to the world that the Allies were endeavouring to encircle Germany, and that the proud German nation would not tolerate such an outrageous action. Secretly Hitler began negotiations with the Russian dictator with the object of thwarting the Allied plan and at the same time securing the neutrality of Russia. The negotiations between the Allies and Soviet Russia lagged on and in the end collapsed due to Poland's obstinacy to allow Russian troops to march into Polish territory even for the defence of that country against Nazi aggression. A glance at the map of Europe will clearly point out that Russia would be unable to offer any appreciable assistance.

Poland without marching her troops into Poland and fighting side by side with the Polish troops on Poland's western front. It was absolutely foolish on the part of the Polish authorities to refuse Soviet help, knowing fully well that neither England nor France could render them any immediate help against a Nazi attack. The rulers of Poland were big landlords and they could not stomach the idea of co-operating with the Bolsheviks, whom they dreaded more than the Nazis. In refusing Soviet help they chose the lesser of the two evils. It was the landlord ruling class of Poland that endangered the freedom of that country pursuant to a policy that aimed at the safeguarding of their own interests. The Poles believed that their Government were earnestly trying to secure Russian help against the Nazis. The news of the breakdown of the negotiations between the Allies and Russia, coupled with the signing of the Russo German Pact, found the Poles more than shocked. It was a bolt from the blue and made the man in the street desperate. Still the Government of Colonel Beck gave out to the people that the Polish Military Machine would resist violently any kind of aggression by the Nazis or the Bolsheviks and called on the people to rally round the Government to defend their freedom and liberty. The people were carried away by the patriotic and inspiring speeches of their leaders. They relied upon their army which was painted as one of the most efficient army in Europe to protect them from the aggressor.

When Stalin discovered that the Western Powers were in a fix at the stupid obstinacy of the Polish Government to allow the Russian troops to march into Poland, he was convinced that the democratic countries were not in earnest about Russia joining the 'Peace Front'. Confronted with the choice of either to ally with his usual cunning strategy,

the Western Powers before they knew it. He joined Hitler, with whom he had much in common, and signed the Russo-German Pact. The announcement of the Russo-German Pact astounded the whole world. At first people refused to believe it. They argued that it was incredible that Hitler could throw overboard his Anti Comintern policy over-night and shake hands with the man whom he denounced as the worst enemy of mankind. But in cooler moments when we examine the regime that prevails in Germany and Russia, we easily recognize the similarity between the two. It is true that each has its own apparently different ideology, at the same time both the ideologies, Nazism and Bolshevism, aim at the establishment of Totalitarian States under dictatorship. The methods adopted by the dictators in both the countries are similar except for the changes necessitated by the composition of the individual State. Thus a thinking man will take it as quite a natural occurrence, though the unexpected turn of events puzzled everyone. Whatever that may be, the signing of the Pact was a great diplomatic victory to Hitler. He had secured the beneficent neutrality of Russia; he had solved the knotty problem of fighting on two fronts; and he had shocked the morale of the Democratic Powers. It took some time for Britain and France to recover from this bomb shell. But surprisingly enough the Western Powers recovered tremendously and reassured the world their determination to fight Nazism at all events.

On the heel of the Russo-German Pact came Hitler's demand on Poland to grant self determination to the Germans in Danzig. Danzig is purely a German city administered by a German Senate. But it is controlled by Poland as it is the only port through which Polish trade can flow out to the Baltic Sea. Deprived of Danzig, Poland

will be ruined economically and her trade will have no free outlet. German control of Danzig will destroy Polish trade and hence Poland refuse to accede to Hitler's demand.

In Danzig, Hitler followed the same policy as in Sudetenland. He selected a leader for the Danzig Germans in the person of Gauleiter Foerster who claimed freedom for his people to return to the Reich. Under his leadership the Germans in Danzig were trained for law-breaking. There were many street brawls between the Polish Police and Germans. When the incidents were repeated with greater intensity Hitler appeared to be much worried and troubled at the maltreatment meted out to his countrymen by the 'barbarous Poles'. Now he decided to free his kith and kins in Danzig from the yoke of Polish atrocities. As his wont he demanded the immediate cession of Danzig to the Reich and free passage for the German troops to the German City (Danzig). The demand was in the nature of an ultimatum backed by the threat of an invasion. The Polish Government refused to comply with the terms of Hitler's ultimatum, and they ordered immediate mobilisation of their army. Before the Poles could man their defences the Germans invaded the country. It was on the 1st of September, 1939. The Poles offered resistance and also requested Britain and France to fulfil their obligations. Somehow it took three days for Britain to go to the help of Poland. On the 3rd of September the British Government and the French Government simultaneously declared war on Germany, and thus the Second World War began.

#### THE FALL OF POLAND

The lightning speed with which Hitler conquered speaks volumes for the tremendous efficiency of the

German war machine. The destruction of Poland was thorough as it was rapid. Even Mr Churchill had to admire German thoroughness in their schemes for attack. As the German army advanced into Poland it met with stout resistance but it was easily swept away. Within the first three days of the war that is, before the British and the French declared their intention to fight the Germans in the way of fulfilling their pledges to Poland Poland's Air force was wiped out of existence by the German airmen. Germany's mastery over the air greatly crippled Polish resistance. Before the Poles were aware that the war had started most of the Polish aerodromes with a large part of their plane equipment had been bombed and made useless for any kind of effective opposition. One observer said that the German airmen did not encounter any opposition from the Polish Air force throughout the whole period of 18 days battle. They had a free hand in bombing open cities and civilian population demolishing bridges and land defences. It is also said that Poland was never able to mobilise her man power to the full. By the time the men were called up to the colours Germans had entered Polish territory, and with their terrible and continuous bombing of civil population completely disorganised all walks of life. The observer remarks that he saw Polish soldiers wandering hither and thither with the rapidly moving stream of civilians with the hope of joining their regiments. They continued to move eastward until they met the Russians. Many a soldier who was anxious to make a stand and fire a shot in defence of his country was utterly disappointed, for the Polish troops were completely disorganized, and they moved with the civilians from town to town with the hope of reaching some defence line. They were quite disillusioned about their country's military

strength and organisation and thought that they had been completely humiliated by the leaders of the country who could not even give them a chance to come to grips with the enemy. Thus the utter disorder and want of organisation of the Polish military machine was the second cause of the 'Polish' tragedy.

Thirdly the German Fifth Columnist had greatly helped to undermine Polish resistance. In Poland there were German, White Russian and Ukrainian minorities. These people never liked the treatment meted out to them by the Poles. They looked forward to a time when they would return to their respective fatherland. These people took the opportunity of the war to revolt against the Polish Government. Thus in many Polish cities a large police force was maintained to prevent the outbreak of revolt. With the collapse of the army and defensive measures the fear of Polish domination by force disappeared. This emboldened the minorities to rise in rebellion. These minorities sincerely believed that with the coming of Germans in Poland they would be granted full independence in their own province. In this they were mistaken. The invaders treated them as vanquished and reduced them to the status of the defeated Poles.

The Polish Government continued to move eastward while the army followed them in retreat. Within a few days of the war the different troops fighting in different sectors lost touch with their Headquarters and the Government. Every battalion seemed to be isolated from one another and they fought only to extricate themselves from the hopelessly difficult situation in which they found themselves. In an effort to save themselves from the clutches of the enemy they offered brave and stout resistance only to be mowed down to the last man by the superior forces of

the Germans. Justice it must be said that every Polish soldier was prepared to fight for the freedom of his country. Only the leaders, especially those who controlled the military organization of the country, were not able to give the soldier a chance to strike a blow for his country.

By the 14th of September the Germans had already covered more than half of Poland. The remnants of the Polish forces were driven far into the east towards the Russian border. It was at this time that the Russian forces entered Poland from the east. At first the Poles thought that the Russians were entering the country to drive back the invaders and protect them from the Nazis. Therefore it was with great feelings of comfort and jubilation that the Poles welcomed the Russians. When the truth dawned upon them a few hours later they had nothing but a few words of abuse for the leaders who had failed to secure the help of the Russians against the Nazis. The Polish Government fled to neutral countries and the people were left to shift for themselves. The remnants of the Polish army was captured by the Germans as well as by the Russians. With the coming of the Russians in Poland the war came to a close very suddenly and the mighty German war-machine moved back. Peace was established between Russia and Germany and the two countries partitioned Poland.

During the eighteen days of the German Polish war the British or the French could not give any effective help to Poland. The Western Powers declared war on Germany, but failed to take any offensive. They waited for the German attack which did not come so soon. The French soldiers stood behind the Maginot Line, while the Germans stood behind the Sigmund Line, firing a few shots occasionally at each other. This kind of mild warfare on

the Western Front did not assist the Poles in any way in defending their country

It is said that Russia stabbed Poland at the back. But the entry into Poland was considered an act of aggression as much justifiable as the Nazi aggression. In a way Stalin stabbed at the back of Poland. If he had gone to the assistance of the Poles knowing fully well that the Poles could not defend their country against the Nazis he would have contributed greatly to the peace of Europe. Even if he desired such a move just before the collapse of Poland, he could not have done it without declaring war on Germany. Now it is past a doubt that it was the Polish Government that refused to accept Russian help when it was offered and therefore it cannot be said that Russia was completely at fault in doing what she did in Poland. On the other hand there is sufficient justification on the side of Stalin. In the first place when he commanded his troops to march into Poland that country was almost overrun by the Germans and it would have been only a matter of hours before the Germans reached the Russian frontier. If Stalin had not crossed the Polish border he would have victimized the White Russians and the Ukrainians before the altar of Nazi lust. As these above mentioned peoples have many things in common with the Russians, and as they naturally belonged to Russia before the Great War of 1914-18 Stalin's move in Poland saved this section of the peoples from the clutches of the Nazis. Again he did an act which was welcomed by the Polish people. Only the Polish Government said that the Russians had committed a wanton outrage by marching into Polish territory.

Again it was an act of self preservation. By marching into Poland Stalin not only rescued the White Russians

Ukrainians, and a large population of Poles from the north but also kept the Nazis at a safe distance from the borders of Russia. Though the German Russian border was in Poland, which was liquidated soon after its fall, Stalin had the better part of the bargain as he gained so much for so little fighting. Besides, he took the Polish Ukraine wheat fields which if it had fallen into German hands would have solved Germany's food problem. A Europe under the leadership of Hitler must have the Ukraine wheat field without which the Greater Germany, or call it Hitler's Europe will starve out of existence. And if Stalin does not concede the 'granary of Europe to Hitler the latter would settle accounts with the Bolshevik Dictator when he has finished with the smaller peoples. Both the Supermen know that they will have to face the day of reckoning before long and they are only trying to avoid the conflict as long as they can help.

Stalin's action in Poland brought to a close Hitler's Polish campaign. On 29th September the Russo German Pact on Division of Poland was signed. The Germans announced the signing of the Pact as a great victory and as a sign of friendly relation between Russia and their country. Apparently it seemed that the Germans had come to some understanding with the Russians regarding the policy the latter would have to follow during the war, but in reality both Hitler and Stalin were playing their own games under the garb of mutual co-operation and friendliness. They not only do not trust each other but are afraid of each other and every move each of them takes is with a clear object of self preservation. Stalin will be the last man on earth to subject to another's dictates and Hitler will not allow any other man to order him. As such whatever may be the variations in the policy

Line but would invade Belgium and Holland in the north or Switzerland in the south. These rumours no doubt frightened the small neutral countries, and they hastened to declare their determination to defend their neutrality. They also mobilized large bodies of men and took necessary precautions. Except for these above mentioned things there was quiet on the Western Front occasionally disturbed by the roar of guns fired across the No Man's Land.

The British organized the dispatch of the British Expeditionary Force to France. Within five weeks of the outbreak of the war 158 000 men had been transported to France. The plan for this great movement had been worked out in great secrecy and carried out efficiently though the operations had been much more difficult than those of 1914. In 1936 the Germans started war with submarine attacks on shipping, and every ship that carried troops from the different corners of the Empire was exposed to the danger of being torpedoed by a German submarine. Again the Germans were tremendously powerful in the air from the very start. The air menace coupled with the submarine nuisance made the transportation of troops a peculiar task. Though there was a lull on the land when there was lull or better say, activity initiated by the Germans. When the war opened the whole German Navy was thought to be in its home waters but really the German submarines had been despatched well before the beginning of hostilities to positions where they would be best placed to prey on British Merchantships. Just nine hours after the beginning of hostilities a German submarine which was in the Atlantic torpedoed the British passenger liner *Athena* which was bound for Canada, with some 10 000 passengers on board, without warning. A number of passenger and crew were killed but the majority were picked up by the British.

destroyers and other neutral ships. The news of the sinking of the liner *Athens* shocked London. The Britishers thought that the Germans could not violate the International Laws of the Sea and torpedo passenger liners without warning. To the Germans the man made Laws are not sacrosanct, they can be changed or neglected as circumstances demand. And Hitler is not the man to stand on formalities or moralities when it comes to conquering or killing. He simply ordered his submarine commanders to sink all enemy ships irrespective of the nature of the cargo they carried. The peace loving Chamberlain and his associates who were at the helm of affairs in England at the start of the War were horrified at the immoral warfare that the Germans had started. But the First Lord of Admiralty, Mr Winston Churchill, understood right well the Nazi method of war and prepared accordingly to meet the submarine menace. As he was not the head of the State he could not have his own way in doing things to oppose the Germans and this greatly helped the enemies to have a fair start in the war at sea.

At the start the conditions were quite favourable to the Germans. The British merchant ships covered every sea, and the Admiralty could not protect all the ships that were scattered on the surface of the vast oceans. The result was the Germans were able to sink British merchant ships to a total of 65 000 tons in the first week of the War. Here we cannot but admit the courage shown by the U boat commanders who did their work successfully. In a short time the British made their position at sea stronger and in consequence the number of ships sunk in the following weeks greatly diminished. On the British side, the sea war opened with equal vigour. The Navy, whenever it was possible to get contact with the German

submarines attacked them vigorously. The British Air Force attacked the German battleships lying in German harbours at the Kiel Canal. However, this was not an effective reply to the German U boat menace. Only the inauguration of convoys protected the merchant ships to some extent from the U boat menace. Even then they were not completely immune from submarine attacks. It seems that as long the War lasts the British merchant ships will be sunk by the German submarines and however the British may try they will not be able to completely drive off the U boats from the theatre of sea war.

The first serious casualty to the British Navy occurred on September 18th when the aircraft carrier *Courageous* was torpedoed by a German submarine a little away from the British Isles. Though here was not a major engagement at sea the German submarines were displaying their mettle. Another German success was the sinking of the battleship *H M S Royal Oak* at anchor in Scapa Flow. It is to be noted here that Scapa Flow is one of the best defended harbours of England, and so it must be admitted that the enemy submarine which sank the battleship performed the most remarkable and daring feat in penetrating the defences of the anchorage. It is more remarkable to note that the German submarine after torpedoing the battleship escaped unscathed. Out of a company of 1,000 men of the *Royal Oak* only 44 survived. Thus the war at sea from the German side was not without remarkable victory. Though the British Navy is the strongest in the world, the German submarines can go a long way in partly nullifying the British Navy and greatly dislocating British trade. As long as the war lasts the British Navy will have to be alert and it should be prepared to give as well as to take a serious blow.

Eastern Europe. In his Reichstag speech Hitler repeated what he said at Danzig. He added that Germany should have a "living space" in Europe and if she could find peaceful means of securing it she would stop the war. He also advanced some vague proposals for limiting certain kinds of armaments. Mr Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, replying to Hitler's peace proposal said that he had attacked Poland in spite of the appeals made by President Roosevelt, Benito Mussolini, the King of Belgium, and the Pope, and that he had not given any proof that his words could be reliable. The Premier said that the British Government could not accept the peace proposals so long as Poland was dominated by Germany. In short, Hitler's peace move was thrown overboard by Britain and France and they decided to stand by Poland and fight for the cause of Democracy. It was no doubt a diplomatic defeat to Hitler. The complete failure of Hitler's so called peace proposals caused considerable confusion in Berlin. Hitler consulted his military advisers and sent a personal message to Stalin to ascertain the exact amount of help he would render to Germany. It was hoped that Stalin would take the same line taken by Hitler and declare from Moscow through his Foreign Minister that he was an enemy of the Allies and that by rejecting Hitler's peace proposals they were extending the war to neutral countries, and that he would regard the Allies as aggressors if the war continued. As if to hint Molotov what he should say, Ribbentrop speaking at Danzig on 24th October said that Great Britain had systematically and secretly prepared for years to wage a terrible war against Germany. He prophesied the downfall of the British Empire and added that Britain would challenge Germany she would share the fate of Poland. Britain ignored Ribbentrop, and Molotov

Bolsheviks into the interior using the Finnish ports in the Arctic, as the naval bases. Again the victors of the World War sent armies through Finland to assist the Russian reactionaries to put down the Russian Revolution. Stalin did not forget these facts. On the other hand he was expecting danger from both Germany and the Allies. Stalin knew that Germany desired weakening of Soviet influence in the Baltic and also Hitler was sending to Finland arms and other war materials up to the outbreak of the Soviet Finland hostilities. Though Hitler was helping Finland to stand firm against the Soviet demands, he would not have honoured the independence of Finland as soon as Russia's influence in the Balkans diminished. The Allies detested the Soviet Union and were willing to go to the length of declaring war on Russia. Mr Hore Belsha, British Secretary for War openly advocated direct invasion of Russia by Britain. He wrote:—"What if tables are turned and the invader himself is invaded? Leningrad, the former capital of Russia is within 50 miles the Mannerheim Line. .... A blow struck at Leningrad might well leave Germany with the Soviet corps in her hand". The above article was written after the Soviet invasion started, but it reflected the attitude of Britain towards the Soviet Union. Stalin never trusted anyone, not even Hitler. He always considered the probability of the capitalist States joining hands with one another to attack the Soviet Union. In fact the appeasement policy of Britain and France was intended to set Hitler against Stalin, and Stalin knew it. He also knew that Hitler would be quite willing to attack Russia at the behest of Britain if only Britain would allow the Germans a free hand in Europe. Again, if there had been no war on the Western Front, Hitler would certainly have challenged Stalin's invasion of Finland. Stalin.

outside the harbour for the battleship to come out of its shelter. On December 17, the battleship came out of the harbour and scuttled herself under orders from Berlin. The Germans were certain that if the ship were to put to sea again she would be sunk or captured by the British Navy. Therefore Hitler ordered the scuttling of the ship so that the enemies might not get the advantage of studying the latest mechanism of the ship. On the heel of the scuttling of the *Graf Spee* followed the scuttling of a big German liner which sighted the British cruisers in the Atlantic. The scuttling of the ships gave the name of 'Scuttler' to Hitler.

This battle of the River Plate was undoubtedly a great victory for the British Navy. Even the captain of the German battleship, Captain Tangendorff gave unreserved praise to the audacity of the attacking cruisers which closed with his ship and smothered her with shells from a distance of no more than a mile and damaged her severely. The battle has triumphantly vindicated Britain's command of the seas. With the scuttling of the *Graf Spee* the men at the Admiralty were eased to a great extent. They were able to destroy one of the three German commerce raiders when it was prowling in the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. It destroyed 50 000 tons of British merchant ships. German activity in the high ways of the sea did not end with the scuttling of the *Graf Spee*. The German submarines were active at short intervals but they were not as successful as the raider. One of the causes for the defeat of the German battleship was that she was managed and worked by inexperienced sailors who were just youths.

#### INVASION OF NORWAY

While the Russo Finland War was in progress Hitler was contemplating the launching of some offensive in the

West. Every one was in the dark as to Hitler's exact intentions. The British politicians could not explore the vagaries of the German Chancellor's mind. They thought that Hitler would concentrate on the East to annex the Balkan States, and would not invade the Low Countries or the Scandinavian countries, as these weak neutral States would form a protective ring on Germany's Western Front. But as the Balkan States showed a determination to resist, Hitler would be very cautious before making an advance in that direction. Again the Allies thought that Mussolini held the passage to the East and Hitler could not hoodwink the *Duce*. Thus they came to the conclusion that Hitler would be forced to launch a diplomatic offensive in the Balkans in an effort to bring the weak neutral States under the Nazi heel. In the meanwhile they hoped to intensify their blockade of Germany.

On April 7, a conference of the British Envoys to the Balkan States was held in London to discuss the possibility of co-ordination between the Allies and the Balkan States in tightening the economic war on Germany. On the next day (April 8) the British Navy mined certain Norwegian territorial waters to block Swedish iron ore reaching Germany through Narvik. The Norwegian Government protested to Britain for mining her waters, but before an answer could be given to the Norwegian Government Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway. The rapidity with which Hitler invaded the Northern Countries showed that Hitler was well-informed about the British intentions to mine the Norwegian waters and thus to block the passage of iron ore to Germany. If Hitler is to continue the war he must be assured of the steady supply of iron ore and other raw materials. Therefore when the Allies intensified the blockade of Germany, Hitler thought of fighting out the issue.

episode ended in the surrender of Finland. The peace that followed was a "second Munich, that is to say it was a peace dictated by Stalin. By the surrender, Finland lost more than what was demanded of her by Russia.

### BATTLE OF RIVER PLATE

During the time when the Russo Finnish war was in progress, German submarines and raiders were active in the Atlantic. One of the three German pocket battleships, *Admiral Graf Spee*, was prowling in the ocean water ways and sinking and attacking many of the British merchantships that carried cargoes to the British Isles. When one remembers that the British Isles depends upon the British Empire and other countries of the East for securing all the raw materials and food stuffs that her industry and population require, one can understand the tremendous damage the British had suffered in the loss of many of their merchantships bringing the very necessities for their existence.

On December 13 three British cruisers, *H M S Exeter*, *Ichikawa* and *Ajona* met the powerful 10,000 ton German battleship, *Admiral Graf Spee* and drove her, in a severely damaged condition, into Montevideo harbour, a South American Port. When the captain of the *Graf Spee* sighted the British cruisers he opened fire and tried to run away as there was not enough fuel to give a stand and continue the battle. But when he found that there were three cruisers and that they were surrounding his ship, he had no other go except to give battle. His guns were sufficient to sink or severely damage any cruiser but in the present battle, his gunners did not get the cruisers. The British cruisers closed with the German ship and hammered it with shells. Finding no way of escape the battleship took shelter in a neutral harbour. The British cruisers followed and waited

He knew that he would be exposing the German Navy to the attack of the superior forces of the Allied Fleet, still however he could rely upon the powerful German Air Force and the Army to win the battle. The success of Hitler's campaign so far has been based on the principle of launching a powerful and lightning attack on some weak point. This strategy helped the Germans to win the battle before the enemy could mobilise his full strength to resist the invasion. Again Hitler always took care to strike at that country which least expected a German invasion.

During the Russo-Finnish War Norway refused to allow the British troops to go to the assistance of Finland. The Norwegian connivance at the rape of Finland by Russia was due to two reasons. In the first place Norway was not strong enough to assist Finland as well as to protect her boundaries from a German invasion which seemed imminent. Germany actually threatened to invade Norway if she would assist Finland directly or indirectly in her resistance to Russian invasion. Norwegians thought that the coming of the Nazis would be more dangerous than sacrificing Finland. Secondly Norway expected that she would be spared her freedom if she would only agree to complete the defeat of Finland by objecting to the passage of assistance to that country through her territory.

The event that followed showed that Hitler allowed Stalin to have a free hand in Finland so that he might be allowed to break the solidarity among the Scandinavian States before he could bring them under his heel. Though Stalin had taken certain naval bases and strategic islands in the Baltic by his conquest of Finland, he had unconsciously fought Hitler's battle in the North. But for the domination of Finland by Russia Hitler would have been forced to face the resistance of the combined forces of the

of Pro German groups in all the small States bordering Germany and to use this group as a means of spreading panic among the civil population of the neutral countries.

Though Hitler had planned the invasion of the Northern Countries at the very beginning of his regime the immediate cause of the conflict was the *Altmark* incident. During the Finnish War Germany threatened Norway and Sweden with invasion if they helped Finland against Russia. Meanwhile Germany was importing vital military materials through Norwegian territorial waters. The British Fleet by Mr Chamberlain's sense of legality was constrained to look on. But the patience of the Admiralty was tried too high when the Norwegian authorities allowed the German ship *Altmark* crammed with British prisoners to use this covered way. One of the British battleships boarded the *Altmark* and rescued all the British prisoners. This was a bold action not initiated by Wills on Churchill the then First Lord of the Admiralty. The Norwegian Government protested but in vain. Once this ice of legality was broken the British Navy took action to prevent the German ships using the Norwegian territorial waters. The British mined the Norwegian waters and this action precipitated the apparently sudden invasion of Northern Countries by Hitler. A couple of days before the invasion of Denmark, many of the German Navy were found in the neighbourhood of Narvik. The British warships put out to sea to engage the enemy. Though the enemy ships showed a clean pair of heels they could not return to their ports unscathed. This was positive proof that Germany was actually preparing for the invasion of Norway even before the *Altmark* incident. Only the incident gave the Nazis an immediate excuse to pounce upon the defenceless countries.

of Denmark and Norway. The rescuing of the British prisoners from the 'Altmark' and the mining of the Norwegian territorial waters by the British Navy was interpreted by the Nazis as the first step for the invasion of the Northern Countries by the allies, and under the guise of protecting these neutral countries against the invasion of the Allies, Hitler invaded them.

When on the 9th of April 1940, the German troops marched into Denmark that country capitulated without even a protest. Considering the might of the invaders, it would have been inviting nothing short of complete annihilation if the Danes had decided to resist. Even if they wanted to resist they had not even a small army worth the name. Denmark was one of the most demilitarised countries in Europe. Though she was one of the most progressive and prosperous countries during the post war years, she took the disarmament programme more seriously than any other member of the League of Nations. Her disarmament was so complete that she was reduced to the status of the most harmless State in Europe. Thus within 24 hours of German invasion Denmark virtually became a part of the German Reich.

The simultaneous invasion of Denmark and Norway points out that Hitler must have nothing more than a walk over in Denmark, and that he must have despatched troops to Norway before he invaded Denmark. This move was further indicated by the rapid occupation of Oslo and other Southern ports of Norway by the German troops. As in the case of Poland the occupation of Norway by the German Army was assisted by the German Air Force. The invasion of Norway began with the bombing of the Southern towns by German planes and the landing of German soldiers on the Norwegian territory. The Allies

## THE LOW COUNTRIES FIGHT

The rapid destruction of Norway's defences by the German forces, was caused due to the Fifth Column activities in that country. Hitler had already prepared that country for attack. By clever lying propaganda carried on for years he had created a strong Fifth Column in Norway, and so at the time when the German troops crossed the sea and landed at Oslo, the Fifth Column had commenced the activities of cutting communications, spreading panic among the civil population, and furnishing valuable information to the German airmen to enable to land on suitable grounds. Besides, the German army was excellently trained for the battle of the North. Hitler diverted the attention of the Allied forces to the Far East and the Mediterranean by his diplomatic war in those quarters. He had carried on 'the war of nerves' in the Balkans and thus led the British to think that he was thinking of striking there, while he concentrated all his might to strike Norway. The British politicians could not imagine what Hitler would do. They were to some extent caught in the German propaganda net and they despatched a few powerful Naval units to the Mediterranean thereby weakening the strength of the forces in the home waters. This was mainly responsible for the British withdrawal from Norway. The last but not the least important factor that helped Hitler in his campaign was the weakness of the Chamberlain Cabinet. Some of the Cabinet members, including the Prime Minister, were defeatists. They dreamt of 'appeasement' and were not serious about conducting the war.

When Hitler's Norwegian campaign was about to come to a close, Britain was threatened by a Cabinet crisis. Hitler thought that the crisis would develop into a revolution.

with Britain and France Again, Hitler was clever enough to keep a few efficient Fifth Columnists in key positions in these countries. These men helped to wipe all suspicions of Hitler's real intentions regarding these countries and thus kept these small would be victims completely disarmed and unprepared to resist any kind of aggression. Thus when Hitler invaded the Low Countries these countries were hopelessly prepared to resist the invader.

The day previous to the German invasion of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg the German wireless announced that Britain after Norway was seeking a new victim to attack. This was clearly a sign that Hitler had decided to attack the Low Countries. This tactic is nothing new. It is the same adopted in Norway. Before the Governments of the Low Countries had time to contemplate on the purpose of such German propaganda the German forces had crossed the boundaries and were advancing towards the coast. The German bombers flew over the capitals of these countries and rained bombs and high explosives. It seemed that the Dutch and the Belgians were taken by surprise.

In Luxembourg it was just a walk over. In Holland the army resisted with no effect. The Dutch depended upon their 'flooding devices' for the defence of the country, but these defences proved of little value against the merciless bombing and machine gunning of the civil population by the German aircraft. German parachutists who descended in hundreds struck terror in the minds of the people and harassed the Dutch army from the rear. This undermined the morale of the troops which in turn brought about the collapse of the defences.

It was in Holland that Hitler used his parachute army with greater success and in greater number. This we pon

which was conceived by the Russians proved to be of immense aggressive value. Nearly 15,000 parachutists were dropped over Holland. Some wore German uniforms others wore French, British or Belgian uniforms, still others were disguised as policemen, workmen, peasants and women. The main task of these men was to supply information to the German authorities about possible landing place; they were also to disrupt communications and to spread panic among the civil population. It is reported that one half of the Dutch casualties were caused either by the parachutists or the Fifth Column.

The political organisation of the Fifth Column in Holland worked with terrifying precision. Not only was Holland a theatre of war with Germany but that country was in a state of civil war. Dutchmen fired at Dutchmen. But for the assistance of these Dutch Fifth columnists the German parachutists could not have succeeded as rapidly as they did. The Queen of Holland left the country and the ministers went to England and the army stopped resisting. Thus the small democratic country, Holland, became a German province. The collapse of Holland was complete. The German force reached the sea coast and captured the ports; they seized the air ports and lines of communications before they were destroyed or damaged by the Dutch. The capture of Holland gave Germany the advantage of a long line of sea ports to concentrate her forces for embarkation when the time for invading England would come. The invasion of the Low Countries was timed to coincide with the Cabinet crisis in England. Hitler invaded the Low Countries on the 10th of May. By then Mr. Chamberlain had resigned and the Parliament was considering the formation of a new Cabinet. Hitler knew that a change of Cabinet would not be able to give immediate assistance to

the Low Countries, and thus the Low Countries would be left to defend themselves against the superior forces of the Germans. Hitler's plan worked with tremendous success. Before the British and the French came to the assistance of the Dutch Holland had been conquered and the Nazis had entered Belgium.

On May 10th, the day when Hitler launched his attack on Luxembourg, Holland and Belgium Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, who was the First Lord of the Admiralty in Mr. Chamberlain's Cabinet, became the Prime Minister of England. England had chosen her man of destiny at the most critical phase of her history. Mr. Churchill is the only person in the British Empire who can conduct the war against the dictators. He is the only British politician who understands the words of the dictators and who is capable of giving Hitler or Mussolini an apt reply. The name of Mr. Winston Churchill will go down in history as the greatest War Premier of England.

Mr. Churchill's Cabinet was expected to revolutionise England's war effort and the Premier did not fall short of the expectations of the people. Soon after his taking the reins of Government he offered all possible co-operation to the Low Countries in their resistance to the invading army. A few hours after the invasion of the Low Countries the Government of the countries requested the Governments of Britain and France to send them sufficient help in materials and men to enable them to defend the independence of their countries. Accordingly the B.E.F. crossed the English Channel and landed in Europe. The French Government also sent their troops to the assistance of the Belgians. But unfortunately for the Low Countries the rapidity of the German advance accomplished by the terrible

striking force of the mighty German War Machine swept away all resistance. Even the combined efforts of the Allied forces were not able to stop the German advance.

On 15th May, the Dutch Commander-in Chief ordered his troops to cease fighting. With this Holland collapsed. On the next day the Germans broke through the French Front north of Sedan and invaded France. The Germans had already entered Belgium and were making rapid advance towards the coast. The Belgians fought bravely under the command of their King. After ten days of strenuous fighting the King of the Belgians capitulated to German invaders. The King of Belgium was denounced for his surrender by the British as well as the French. The Belgian Ministers who had gone to London said that King Leopold's action was constitutionally invalid. They also said that the Belgians would be ashamed of their King who played the part of a traitor. The Allied newspapers called the King 'traitor' some of them characterising him as King 'Quisling'.

The German *Communique* issued from the headquarters of the German High Command said — "The King of the Belgians, impressed by the destructive effect of the German arms has decided to give up further senseless resistance. He had complied with the German order to capitulate unconditionally. The Belgian army has accordingly laid down its arms today and has thus ceased to exist."

If one will examine the position with the facts available one will admit that the German *Communique* has spoken the truth for once. King Leopold cannot be called a traitor. He surrendered to the Germans when he found that his army could no longer resist effectively, and that the help from the Allies would not be available in such

great quantities as would be necessary to check the murders. But unfortunately for the King many stories imputing many motives cropped up and the King who stood by his troops at the hour of the terrible German onslaught was denounced in quite indecent terms.

Today when the emotion and wrath of the moment has died down the British people look at the action of King Leopold with an unbiassed eye and are veering round to the opinion that King Leopold could not have done anything else under the terrible circumstances in which he and his army found themselves. French opinion is reflected in the words of Romain Rolland who on behalf of the French Government was engaged in bringing about peace in Europe. He had many interviews with the kings of Holland Belgium Norway and Sweden and he worked in collaboration with Henri de Man who exerted great influence over the King of Belgium. Romain Rolland says,

King Leopold III had always been secretly a Germanophile of Fascist tendencies. The influence of his mother Queen Elizabeth and perhaps also the Batavian blood of that mother had finally conquered. From the time in 1936, when he caused the break in alliance between his country and ours until the beginning of the war itself he had never ceased fooling us in connivance with Germany. At the time of the German attack he had pretended to resist and appealed to the Anglo French armies to draw them into a trap. Now he had put aside the mask and with the help of a Socialist Fascist, Henri de Man, who hoped to be right at hand he was constituting a Government at Germany's beck and call.

However deplorable the attacks could not be avoided in the circumstances. The collapse of the French armies showed that their chiefs were mainly responsible for the

defeat of the Allies in Belgium. When the French Command failed to send troops to the assistance of Belgium in time, the situation of the Belgian Army had become so critical that its capitulation was imminent. For eighteen days the Belgians put up stubborn resistance but they were encircled by the Germans, they were deprived of food and supplies and the R A F failed to protect them against air attacks. If the King would have continued fighting, his army would have been completely routed and then he would have been guilty of slaughtering many of his men.

The Allied Command complained that King Leopold capitulated without their consent and thus prevented the British and the French to take measures to check the entry of the Germans into France as well as their reaching the coast. This grumbling has no basis. On 27th May the day before the capitulation of Belgians King Leopold sent a telegram to Gort: "The Army has lost its heart, after four days unceasing fighting under an intense bombardment which the R A F has not been able to prevent. Aware that the Allied armies are encircled and that the enemy possessed a great superiority in the air. The troops believe that the situation has become desperate. The moment approaches when they will be unable to continue the struggle. The king will be obliged to capitulate in order to avoid a rout."

How did the British and the French Commanders respond to this telegram? On 28th May, the British Mission attached to the Belgian Air Force left the field with all its equipment and a French Division was conveyed on Belgian lorries towards the coast. This proves that the British and the French Commanders might have realised that the capitulation of the Belgian Army could not be avoided.

In fine one cannot impose the guilt on King Leopold. The only cause of the failure of the Allied Arms in Belgium is the superior striking power and the novel method of German warfare. The Battle of Belgium opened the eyes of Britain and France to the fact that superiority in the air is a deciding factor in modern warfare. As these two great powers did not possess that superiority they had to surrender to the Germans.

Today King Leopold is a prisoner of war. He has not entered into any pact with Hitler. He and his people are virtually at war with Germany. For this we have the authority of the Belgium Minister of Colonies M de Vleeschauwer. The Minister broadcasting in Flemish from London on 24th October, 1940 said — Our brave army commanded by King Leopold defended our country courageously, and in an exemplary manner against the unprovoked assault of the Germans. The uneven fight lasted 18 days. The capitulation of our army on May 28, often referred to in a thoughtless and malevolent manner, was as confirmed by subsequent events, an inevitable necessity created by the military situation.

No armistice or peace has since been concluded. Legally and practically, we are still at war with Germany. On the same day (May 28) the King the Commander-in-Chief of our army, was taken prisoner and continues in captivity together with officers and his field army.

Thus the Low Countries were annexed by Hitler. It was a great triumph for the German Chancellor. The fate of the Low Countries threatened the independence of all the small nations in Europe. Though the small States were much weaker than Germany in all respects, they would not have lost their independence had they stood united to resist.

troops would be foiled by the German Air Force. The success of the Germans in Holland and Belgium and their breaking through the French lines convinced even the veterans of the British Fighting Forces that evacuation of troops would be beset with various dangers. The British Ministers hoped to rescue only 50,000 troops all told. But they were determined to send every vessel available to evacuate the troops from France. As the German advance penetrated the interior of France, the B.E.F. could be evacuated only through one port, Dunkirk. Even that port had been hammered by the Germans from the air. As the troops concentrated on the beach waited for boarding the vessels that were to carry them to England, the Germans rained bombs over the port as well as the beach. The troops were living under the heavy hammer strokes of the enemy from the air. Still they survived the great ordeal and managed to get to England. The exploits of the Royal Navy at Dunkirk was a miracle. All the vessels from battleships to fishing boats, more than a thousand in number, were engaged in the work of carrying troops. Many of the fishermen put to sea, even without orders, for the spirit of the sea burned in them. Among the men who volunteered to handle the boats and smaller vessels were bankers, dentists, taxi drivers, yachtsmen, boys-engineers, fishermen and civil servants. It was the spirit of England, the spirit of the English Navy that was mobilised to achieve that greatest of tasks.

The 'great armada' started from England, crossed the Channel, and came to Dunkirk. The German E-boats were quite active trying to sink every vessel, but they had no success. Though they claimed a few small vessels the vast number of the ships and boats that were employed returned - some loaded with men and materials. The whole operation

was carried out under the heavy 'Air Blitz' launched by the Germans. Waves of German bombers flew over the ships raining bombs, but the Royal Navy carried on the work unmindful of the Germans. After a week of strenuous work, the British Navy brought home 335,000 troops, British and French and Indians. It was a marvellous feat. It was a miracle. It proved beyond doubt the superiority of the British Navy. It also demonstrated the repeated saying "who command the seas command the world." Dunkirk was the only bright spot in the first battle the Allies fought in Europe.

The German advance continued into France. The French Army gave away bit by bit after a strenuous battle, and the Nazis occupied more than two thirds of the country. Paris was bombed by German planes and the German Army and the German mechanized units were on the outskirts of Paris. The Germans occupied the whole of the French coast facing the English Channel. The French Cabinet changed and the power passed into the hands of military commanders. On 17th June, Marshall Petain, the new Premier of France, announced cessation of fighting between France and Germany. Marshall Petain declared that France had lost much of her territory and that further fighting would be useless. Again he observed that he did not want to see the city of Paris, the foremost symbol of civilisation and Freedom in Europe, demolished by ruthless German bombing. He demanded Hitler to sign an honourable peace with him, as between soldiers. Thus Marshal Petain allowed the German Army to enter Paris without a fight. The Government fled, first to Tours, then to Bordeaux. At present it is in Vichy.

It is impossible to exactly state the reasons for the military collapse of France; however we can point out-

certain relevant facts which throw some light on the matter. In the first place the capitulation of France was effected by a group of military chiefs with Fascist tendencies. This group aspired for power and desired to establish dictatorship in France. Secondly the Communists in France were spreading defeatist rumours with the avowed object of bringing about a revolution in the country. This group attacked the British and said that England would be a bad ally of France. The communists aimed at attacking England as the ally of France, because they wanted to spread the fear of Fascism among the public so that the country might be ready to stage a Bolshevik Revolution. Just before the capitulation of France, that country was on the brink of a revolution. The French Communist Party was a well-organised one having a large following. If the Communists had succeeded in bringing about a revolution they would have captured power.

Fear of Communism certainly had a strong defeatist influence on the minds of Petain, Weygand, and many of their military and political associates. These men feared revolution far more than they feared the enemy. Not that there was no danger of revolution in France—only the danger was mostly increased by the fear of it. Again these military chiefs did not know how to put down the revolution if one would break out. Further, the German 'whispering campaign' spread the words "England is going Fascist anyhow and what is the use of fighting when Fascism is coming just the same?". These words, very adroitly spread among the soldiers as well as the civil population, created a general apathy. The people as a whole were indifferent to the result of the war. Thus it was the internal trouble and the fear of Communism that forced Marshal Petain to surrender to the Nazis.

Military France was quite unprepared to wage a war against Germany. The Maginot Line was never broken. It was lent. Many soldiers who were defending the Maginot Line refused to believe the surrender of Petain and continued to resist the invading German Army. But these soldiers were trapped in the fortress of the Maginot Line and thus were forced to lay down arms. It was the revolutionary military and aerial warfare of the Germans that took the French by surprise. To add to all the French had not the necessary military weapons to resist the German advance.

During the few days of battle, we hardly heard about the activities of the French Air Force. When M. Reynaud became the Premier of France he discovered that the French Air Force and the French Mechanised Units existed only on paper. There were personal quarrels among the politicians and the frequent change of Cabinet was due to the manoeuvres of one group against the other. Even M. Reynaud had to admit that his War Minister M. Daladier, the former Premier, was plotting his defeat. The apparent unity in the Cabinet was actuated by the motive to dethrone M. Reynaud. Thus the astounding collapse of France was caused by the disorderly state of affairs in the country and by the unpreparedness of the French forces to meet and resist the invaders.

It is believed that the Italian stab at the back of France had quickened the collapse of French resistance. There is not much truth in this. Mussolini declared war on France on the 20th of June just a week before the capitulation of Marshal Petain. What made Mussolini declare war on France? Was Hitler fighting a losing battle? Had he reached his final gamble? Perhaps Hitler's losses in Flanders and the French campaign must

have been very serious. The resistance of the British and the French Forces must have been formidable and the activity of the Royal Air Force must have been devastating. Except for these reasons Hitler would not have thought of calling Mussolini to join him in the French campaign. It is also possible that Hitler and Mussolini must have agreed about the time of Mussolini's joining the war and Mussolini must have acted according to a pre arranged plan. There is another possibility. The German success in France must have told Mussolini that he had the best of opportunities for making a gamble and sharing in a victory without actively engaging in a major battle. Mussolini must have been keen on propping up his prestige in Europe and must have decided to join the war simply to win the laurels of victory without fighting. If Hitler alone had won the battle in Europe then Mussolini would have lost his face to use a Japanese expression in Europe. Whatever might have been the reasons that prompted the *Duce* to stab at the back of France by entering the war he has dug the grave of Italy and himself.

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Printed at the Śrīdhāra Printing House, and Published by  
Messrs. C. S. Raja & Co., Srivaram Street,  
Trivandrum.

# CONTENTS

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	PAGE
<b>Hitler's War—Part III</b>	
After the fall of France	1
The fall of British Somaliland	8
The Battle of Britain	11
Here and There	16
Italy Attacks Greece	22
Battle of Libya	29
Collapse of Bulgaria	32
America Enters the War	34
Yugoslavia	36
A speck of light	39
April and May	41
<b>Hitler's War—Part IV.</b>	
Crusade against Bolshevism	51
German Blitzkrieg in Russia	59
Battle of Smolensk	61
Atlantic Charter	66
The Battle of Kiev and Leningrad	70
Climax of the Russian Campaign	75
The Battle for Moscow and Crimea	80
Japan on the war-path	90

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

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This is the second volume of the chronicle of the Second World War. It contains two parts which were separately published in 1941 and 1942. The third part with which this volume begins traces the course of the war from the collapse of France to the British withdrawal from Crete. The fourth part is entirely devoted to the chronicle of the German invasion of Russia.

# HITLER'S WAR

## (PART III)



### After the fall of France

The collapse of France was a severe blow to the Allies. It left England alone to bear the brunt of the German onslaught. Now the war was mainly fought between Germany and England and it appeared that the outcome of the war depended upon the result of Hitler's attempt to invade England. There was much speculation in England and America regarding Hitler's next move. The British politicians were certain that Hitler would concentrate all his energies to cripple and destroy the power of the R. A. F. (Royal Air Force) as a prelude to the invasion of England. The collapse of France convinced America that she should go to the help of England if she wanted to prevent Hitler from planting the Nazi standard in the Western Hemisphere. The fall of France gave a philip to President Roosevelt and his success in the ensuing presidential elections was forecast by the American papers. Many of the Americans who were against entering or intervening in a European war now realised that England and her Navy stood on the way of Hitler's march to the Western Hemisphere and veered round to support Roosevelt's decision to help England and the cause of democracy. It can be rightly said that the strength of the Isolationists in America diminished greatly after the fall of France.

In the Balkans things looked dangerous. The small States which have kept aloof so far and have vociferously announced their determination to defend their neutrality, began to lose confidence in their strength to oppose the

Nazis These States became fear stricken and thus provided the most favourable field for German propaganda. When the Nazi intrigue developed in the Balkans, especially in Rumania, Stalin smelt danger and took the opportunity of occupying Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina thus depriving Rumania of part of her territory. Stalin's move was not at all appreciated by the Democratic Powers. He was accused of grabbing the territories of weak neighbours. But Stalin knew Hitler well and he was certain that in the near future he would be required to face the Nazis in a battle field and that battle-field would be the western frontier of Russia. Stalin's chief motive in occupying Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina was to keep away the Nazis as far away from proper Russian soil as possible. He took time by the forelock and gained a definite advantage over Hitler. Under the protection of the Russo-German Pact, Stalin did everything his cunning could conceive to defeat the very purpose of the Pact. By his action in Rumania, Stalin smote Hitler in the face knowing fully well that Hitler would not dare to oppose him in the then existing circumstances. No doubt, Hitler could not stomach such trickery on the part of his Bolshevik friend, but he could not openly accuse Stalin of anything for fear of breaking the Russo-German Pact. So for the time being, Hitler's hands and mouth were bound by the 'great friendship' between the peoples of Russia and Germany. Hitler and his associates kept mum over the affair, even the verbosity of Dr. Goebbels was kept under check. Anyhow Stalin's move in Rumania quickened that country's doom. Note it was only quickened, for the destruction of Rumania was certain, so long as she stuck to that 'dangerous neutrality' that sent many small independent nations to their graves. Even before the marching of Soviet troops into Rumania, Germans had entered that country under the disguise of technicians and

travellers and were organising a Fifth Column. They were undermining the unity of the Rumanian people and were planning the destruction of that State as an independent entity. If Stalin had not advanced, Hitler would have advanced. Thus Rumania was between two fires. The Russo German Pact made her position very delicate. Hitler to whom the Rumanian leader looked for assistance and guidance could not check the Russian advance. The British guarantee was practically useless after the fall of France. Under such circumstances Rumania bowed to the inevitable. For good or bad, she renounced the British guarantee on 1st of July 1940, and openly associated with the Axis. This action was a blow to British policy in the Balkans, for Rumania was the largest country in the Balkan group and besides she was one of the most important oil producing countries in Europe. British oil interests in Rumania suffered a great set back but Britain, threatened by an imminent invasion of her very shores could do nothing.

With the signing of the Franco-German Armistice, France ceased to exist as a European power. The capitulation of France made available to Hitler the whole of the French coast-line in the west facing the English Channel and the North Sea. Italy was relieved of the fear of an attack by the French at her rear and besides she got more freedom of movement in the Mediterranean.

In the meanwhile Italian troops were being transported to Libya and great preparations were being made by the Italians to launch an attack on British positions in North Africa and Egypt. Marshal Graziani took over the command of the Italian forces in North Africa and a large concentration of Italian troops numbering 22 000 was noticed on the Libyan border. Also the Italians were preparing to launch an attack on British Somaliland from Abyssinia.

The fall of France found England in a tight corner. On the one hand she was threatened with an imminent invasion of her very shores, and on the other Suez, her life-line to the East, was threatened by the Italian forces from Libya and Abyssinia. To add to all these troubles, a few French battle ships which were under the control of Marshal Petain seemed to be going over to the Nazis. There was every sign that Hitler would try to secure the use of those battleships against England and Marshal Petain seemed too weak to hold the battleships. Those battleships could be of immense use to Hitler to cut and damage Britain's Mediterranean life line. This fact did not escape the shrewd Churchill. Finding that the Franco-German Armistice terms did not lay down any definite line of action to be followed regarding the disposal of the French battleships, and believing rightly that they would find their way to the German controlled docks and harbours, the British Premier ordered the British Navy to steam into the French ports and seize the French battleships. It was a very wise decision that Mr Churchill took, though it greatly pained all English sailors to strike at their former ally. But necessity forced their hands to do their duty, while their hearts went out to the French people.

As a result of the seizure of the French battleships, France broke off diplomatic relations with Britain. This marked a dramatic diplomatic victory for Germany. It was under German pressure that France broke off relations with Britain. Now Britain had lost the moral and material support of a big Power in Europe, and besides, the small States in Central Europe, who had some faith in the prowess of the Western Powers, utterly lost confidence in a victory for the Democratic Powers, and rapidly veered.

round to the Axis Powers. The small States found themselves caught between two of the mightiest armies in Europe, the German forces and the Soviet forces. Strangely enough these States preferred a Nazi yoke to a Bolshevik one. In the hope of saving their lives these States vied with one another in showing their sympathy with the Axis ideals and they proclaimed from house-tops their willingness to get themselves absorbed in Hitler's "New Order". Another significant thing that occurred just after the collapse of France was that the Balkan States were at one another's throats. Rumania was the immediate victim. Hungary and Bulgaria demanded big slices of land from Rumania. All the three countries appealed to Hitler to help them defend their claims. This afforded Hitler an excellent opportunity to rope in all these three countries under the "New Order". Hitler was willing to act as arbitrator to settle the dispute between the States. When the States agreed to this, Hitler under the threat of invasion compelled Rumania to cede the territories demanded by both Hungary and Bulgaria. Thus Hitler had dismembered the biggest of Balkan States, and had secured Hungary and Bulgaria as pawns in his game. One who remembers the game Hitler played at the time of the annexation of Czechoslovakia, can easily foresee that Hungary and Bulgaria who had been satisfied at the expense of Rumania will be brought under Nazi domination in the near future. If these States showed any attempt to resist they would be invaded and destroyed and they would go the same way Poland went. Poland not only connived at the destruction of Czechoslovakia, but also shared a part of the booty. And we know what happened to Poland. She not only did not keep her booty but also lost her very independence. In the same way by asking Hitler to arbitrate in their

dispute with Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria signed their death warrant. Today to all purposes these two States are under the German domination and they are being used to help the Nazis in fighting their enemies. Leaving the Balkans there we shall turn our attention to the events in the order of occurrence.

After the conquest of France Hitler showed his desire to dictate peace. This peace offensive was a prelude to an attack on England. There was nothing new in this peace-offer. Hitler had offered peace many times before and every peace offer was followed by an attack on the country to which he offered peace. Now Hitler offered peace to England. In his Reichstag speech on 19th July he said, "In this hour I feel it to be my duty before my own conscience to appeal once more to reason and common sense to Great Britain as much as elsewhere. I consider myself in a position to make this appeal since I am not a vanquished seeking for favours but a victor speaking in the name of reason. I can see no reason why this war must go on. I am grieved to think of the sacrifices which it will claim. I should like to avert them also for my own people. I know that millions of German men young and old alike, are burning with desire at last to settle accounts with the enemy, who for the second time has declared war upon us for no reason whatever. But I also know that at home there are many women and mothers, who are ready as they are to make sacrifices of all they have in life, are yet bound to it by their very hearts. Possibly Mr Churchill will again brush aside this statement of mine by saying that it is merely born of fear and doubt in our final victory. In that case I shall have relieved of my conscience with regard to things to come. In looking back upon the last ten months we are struck by the grace of Providence, which has

7  
allowed us to succeed in our great work. As for myself I am deeply moved, realising that Providence had called upon me to restore to my people their freedom and honour."

Regarding the outcome of the war he said, "I do, however, realise that this struggle, if it continues, can end only with the complete annihilation of one or the other of the two adversaries. Mr Churchill may believe that this will be Germany, I know that it will be Britain."

In short Hitler demanded the surrender of Britain. Hitler said that he had conquered nearly the whole of Europe and thus had established his right to build up German hegemony in Europe. He wanted Great Britain to accept Germany's leadership in Europe. Also he pointed out that if Britain would not surrender to the might of Germany, Britain would be completely annihilated.

Britain, however, refused to surrender. On the other hand the British people under the leadership of their Prime Minister, Mr Winston Churchill told Hitler to go to the Devil. Mr Churchill brushed aside Hitler's peace offer and proclaimed to the world England's determination to fight to the end and destroy Hitler and Hitlerism. Now it became inevitable for Hitler to continue the war. Hitler was confident that he would be able to crush British resistance by first crippling the power of the R. A. F. and then successfully invading the country. He gave orders to the *Luftwaffe* to reduce London to ashes. Now began the fierce battle in the air unprecedented in the history of the human race. Even the British people were terribly afraid of the *Luftwaffe* but they were determined to suffer the worst to save the country from the Nazis. The way in which Britain opposed the Germans in the air and the coolness with which

her people suffered the terrible loss and destruction caused to their homes during the three months of the air-battle is admirable. Before going into details regarding the air battle over England, we shall cast our eyes to another theatre of war. Hitler had planned to launch simultaneous attacks in the East and the West. While the *Luftwaffe* was active over England, the tail-end of the Axis, the Italian forces, was active in Africa. The Italian forces invaded British Somaliland from Abyssinia.

### The Fall Of British Somaliland

On August 6, the Italian forces invaded British Somaliland. Geographically British Somaliland lies wedged between French and Italian Somalilands. The collapse of France deprived the British of the assistance of the French forces. Besides, French Somaliland observed neutrality thereby exposing the western part of British Somaliland to Italian attacks. Over and above all these, the British had stationed only a very small number of troops in this Protectorate. The British forces were mainly concentrated in Egypt to prevent the Italian attack from Libya. In short, British Somaliland put up stubborn resistance to the invaders with the main object of cutting the enemy communications and inflicting heavy losses before yielding ground. The Italian forces were tremendously superior to the British forces in number and equipment, and had the advantage of powerful mechanised units.

The Italians advanced in three columns and retained the initiative throughout the ten days of battle. No doubt, they suffered heavy losses as they advanced along the coast, being shelled and bombed by the British Navy in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. The battle progressed to the advantage of the invaders and the British prepared

for the evacuation of the Protectorate. This was, no doubt, a victory for the Axis and defeat for the British. We can say that it was more of a defeat for British prestige in the East than for British arms. The evacuation of British Somaliland lowered British prestige in the eyes of the Eastern Nations and for the time being there was anxiety and fear, if not panic, among the people of those countries which depended upon the British Army and Navy for their protection. In England the British defeat in Somaliland was accepted as inevitable, at the same time the Prime Minister was criticised for his conduct of the war. It even seemed possible that the Axis forces would launch an attack on Aden, Egypt and Suez. The British people knew that everything depended upon how they would resist the Italian attacks in those areas and they knew well that the only way of reviving confidence in the minds of the people in the British possessions in the East would be to deal a heavy blow to the Axis forces in Libya. For the time being there was a great cloud hovering over the whole of the British Empire. There was doubt and suspicion in the hearts of all about the outcome of the war. The British Empire was in the greatest danger and the Axis propaganda gave out that the Empire was on its last legs and would crumble down at any moment. It must be admitted frankly that thousands of the subjects of His Majesty believed that Britain would fall. In those dark hours when every thing seemed to be slipping from our hands there was one ray of hope, and that was the magnificent way in which the R. A. F. drove back the German eagles from the skies over England. In the Battle of Britain that was raging fiercely, it seemed that the Germans for once had not been successful, and the British people, in spite of the severe damage inflicted on them and their homes by the German bombers did not lose their morale. They bore the brunt of the attack defiantly and magnanimously.

The month of August ended with one notable incident in the Balkans. King Carol of Rumania abdicated. The cause of the abdication was the cession of part of Transylvania to Hungary. Rumania was forced to cede this territory under the threat of a Nazi invasion. As I have already pointed out, Rumania agreed to accept Hitler's verdict regarding the long-standing disputes between herself and her neighbours, Hungary and Bulgaria, and Hitler, to serve his own interests, decided that Rumania should cede part of Transylvania to Hungary. This decision of Hitler was hailed as a betrayal by the peasants of Transylvania and they rose in revolt against King Carol who had allowed such things to happen. The rebellion was put down with the help of the German Gestapo and the Iron Guards (the Fascist Army of Rumania). King Carol who was partly responsible for the *Nemesis* that had overtaken his country found his throne untenable and hence abdicated. The result was catastrophic to Balkan unity. If the Rumanians had settled their disputes with their neighbours peacefully, then there was a possibility of all the peoples of the Balkans jointly forming a bloc to defend their independence against any foreign aggression. The Balkan States were at one another's throat for years and their failure to unite even at the critical hour when their very independence was in the balance decreed their doom. The surrender of Rumania to Axis arbitration destroyed the last ray of hope of Balkan unity and placed Balkan and Danubian countries at the mercy of their powerful and aggressive neighbours, Germany and Italy. In dismembering Rumania Hitler had scored a victory over the Allies in the Balkans; also he had pronounced capital sentences on these countries.

## The Battle of Britain

When Churchill brushed aside the peace offer of Hitler, the dictator decided that England should be defeated at any cost. He commanded Marshal Goering, to let loose the *Luftwaffe* over England. Thus began the Battle of Britain. Nothing like the air Battle of Britain had ever been fought before in the history of mankind. In the Great War of 1914-18 there were combats in the air between small formations of fighter aircrafts but the fight was between individual planes. A decisive victory was decided by the slow-moving infantry in Flanders. In the present war things have changed greatly and the Germans, who have, perhaps, the largest number of aircrafts, have decided to score a victory in the air before attempting an invasion of Britain. The German airmen were confident of victory, for during the ten months of battle that had gone by, the Germans had scored victory after victory mainly because of their superiority in the air. It was the air-superiority of the Germans that enabled the German tank and mechanised columns to penetrate the enemy lines in Poland, Belgium and France. In the campaign in Norway it was the German air-force that drove the English troops out of the country. Even the British Navy could not stand her ground and support the British land-forces against the German attacks from the air. Thus drunk with the victory of the past ten months of war in Europe, the German airmen thought that they would be able to cripple the Royal Air Force and destroy the ports and aerodromes in England thereby facilitating the German army to land on English soil to strike at the British land defences. For once the German airmen were defeated. Their confidence was rudely shaken by the magnificent resistance of the Royal Air Force.

attacks for a week, but she knew that Hitler had not given up the battle and that it would be resumed with greater intensity and violence. In the meanwhile the British aircraft were regularly flying over the French Coast and bombing the invasion barges and army concentrations. It is to be remembered here that Hitler was so confident of success in the air-battle that he had concentrated specially trained invasion-troops and barges at the French Ports. He was ready to invade Britain and carry the war into the enemy country, but everything depended upon the smashing of the power of the R. A. F. Well, so far the R. A. F. had proved a match for the *Luftwaffe* and for the first time the German *blitzkrieg* over England failed.

When the second phase of the German attack was launched it was on a wider sphere. This time the German airmen did not concentrate on coastal towns and ports, but covered a wide range paying their attention to all the inland aerodromes and aircraft factories. This time a larger number of bombers escorted by a greater number of fighters than on the previous occasion made a determined attack. The attack lasted for twelve days commencing from 24th August and lasting up to 5th September. During this period more than 35 major attacks were delivered by the *Luftwaffe*. The attacks were successful in so far as they caused great damage to property and civilian life, but it was once again a failure as it did not succeed in its objective. The *Luftwaffe* set out to destroy the R. A. F. but to the great consternation of the German leaders, the R. A. F. gained the upperhand in the battle and German aircrafts turned tails and fled. The second phase of the Battle of Britain cost the Germans nearly 600 aircrafts and hundreds of pilots.

In spite of such heavy losses Marshal Goering would not accept defeat. Now he was determined to reduce the

capital to ashes. During this third and the last phase of the Battle of Britain the German airmen concentrated their attack on London. Perhaps, Hitler must have thought that by raining bombs on London and causing terrible destruction to property and civilian life, he could compel the Britons to surrender, but he was greatly mistaken in such conception of British morale. The British people with their traditional bull-dog tenacity continued their resistance and were ever ready to lay down their lives in the defence of their country's independence. In this third offensive on England Hitler threw the whole weight of the *Luftwaffe* and hammered London and suburbs to his heart's content, still he could not break down the morale of the British people. Besides the R. A. F. as before inflicted heavy losses on the *Luftwaffe* and in the end the German airmen showed their unwillingness to encounter British aircrafts. London did not emerge unscathed from the blows delivered by the Germans. The Germans inflicted damage on docks, buildings, several factories, railway communications and electric plants. Great and famous buildings such as Buckingham Palace, St. Paul's Cathedral, and the Houses of Parliaments were damaged by the Germans. Thousands of lives were lost. The Germans could not accomplish the ruin they had wrought easily. They paid very heavily. They lost nearly 900 aircrafts during the 32 major attacks they launched between 6th September and 5th October. After the 5th October the German offensive lost its vigour and the R. A. F. became the master of the air over England. The Germans attempted a few more attacks but they were met over the Channel by the Spitfires and Hurricanes and driven back. They were not allowed to go anywhere near their objective. Thus the attack died down and slowly came to an end.

Battle of Britain was over. The battle resulted in the defeat of the *Luftwaffe* and the victory of the R. A. F. Hitler's invasion plan had to be postponed for some future period. England was for the time being saved from the danger of invasion. In truth England got a new lease of life and this she owed to the R. A. F. Before closing the account of the Battle of Britain I should not fail to make a mention of the offensive part played by the R. A. F. Besides protecting England from the German mass raids, the British airmen were also engaged in launching attacks on German ports and German occupied ports in Northern France. Also they raided Berlin to avenge the German raids on London. Though the R. A. F. offensive on Berlin was not so intensive and fierce as the German raid on London, at least the R. A. F. demonstrated to the German people that their capital was not immune from air attacks. They gave the Germans a taste of what to expect in the future. The R. A. F. raids on Berlin did cause damages to property and lives, but more than that it shook the German moral. The Germans were assured by Goering and Goebbels that Berlin would be safe from air-attacks and that the defences of Berlin were so strong that it would be impossible for any enemy aircraft to penetrate them. Now the R. A. F. raids brought home to the German people that in the near future they should be prepared to take all they had given to the British people. The raids told the German people that Britain was resolved to destroy German industries and factories and other defences in the same way in which the *Luftwaffe* did in England.

To sum up, in the Battle of Britain, the Germans met their equals. The complacency and confidence they had gained due to their easy victory over weaker nations received a shock from the blows of the R. A. F. The

Germans learned from the Battle of Britain that the British were as tough as they themselves were and to win battles against Britain would not be so easy as it had been against other peoples. Hitler seemed to have realised this even before he launched the air attack on England. He seemed to have come to the conclusion that there were only two great powers in Europe and they were England and Germany. He also had resolved that it was impossible for both these to be the leader of the world. It should be either England or Germany. In his speech on July 19 he had admitted this fact. When he offered peace to England he virtually demanded her surrender thereby recognising Germany's leadership. When England scorned at Hitler's peace offer the superman of Germany resolved to fight out the issue. Thus the present war is a war for the domination of the world and not one for the revision of the Versailles Treaty and Hitler has resolved that Germany should be the leader and ruler of the world. In the battle of Britain the English people backed by their Dominions and Colonies had challenged Hitler's claim to dominate the world. By winning the Battle of Britain the English people had dealt the first blow to Hitler's leadership of the world.

### Here and There

With the commencement of the Battle of Britain Hitler intensified the war at sea. When a war rages on more than one front and in more than one form one is apt to forget the lesser important events. From the very beginning of the war the Germans concentrated on the attack of British merchant vessels sailing the high seas. Once Britain's sea communications are cut and her merchant ships destroyed she will be starved and starvation will force her to surrender. One of Hitler's aim was

to blockade Britain by sinking and attacking vessels carrying cargoes to Britain. This he intended to accomplish by launching a submarine attack from under the sea and bombing from the air. While the *Luftwaffe* was pounding the British ports and setting ablaze British cities, the German raiders and submarines lay in wait on all the important ocean routes to pounce upon the British convoys. To some extent the Germans succeeded in this campaign. The British losses were severe but not much as to cripple her sea communications. As the days passed Britain seemed to master the situation in the Atlantic. The Royal Navy ploughed the deep in search of Nazi raiders and submarines and destroyed a good number of them. As a result of the vigilance of the British Navy and the Fleet Air Arm most of the Nazi raiders were driven to shelters in ports, and British shipping losses began to be on the decline. However, it was not possible for Britain to completely eliminate the Nazi raiders or submarines from the ocean high-ways, nor was it possible for the Nazis to cut off the British sea communications. This sea war will be waged till peace comes to be established and both sides will have to be prepared for losses.

The Battle of Britain did not turn out as Hitler expected. The failure of the Battle of Britain found a huge concentration of Nazi troops on the western ports of France. These troops were brought to invade Britain as soon as the Nazis would establish air supremacy over the R. A. F. Again, Marshal Graziani failed to launch the much talked of offensive. The large concentration of Italian forces in Libya and the movements of Italian troops from Abyssinia to the border of Sudan gave the impression that Hitler and Mussolini were planning two major offensives to be launched against Egypt to synchronize with the invasion

of Britain. The failure of the *Luftwaffe* to destroy the power of the R. A. F. upset Hitler's timetable. Though Marshal Graziani had more than 300,000 troops under him he did not launch the attack. The Italians moved slowly along the North African coast up to Sidi Barrani. Their movement was hampered by the Mediterranean Fleet and the R. A. F. stationed at Cairo. The British battleships shelled enemy troop concentrations along the coast and the R. A. F. set on fire dumps of ammunition and stores, while the British advance petrol engaged the advancing enemy in skirmishes. In the meanwhile the Imperial troops stationed in Egypt and Sudan were greatly reinforced and strengthened to launch an attack on Marshal Graziani's forces.

In the Balkans things were heading for trouble. Everything that happened in the Balkans helped Hitler in his chief object—the destruction of Balkan unity. Trouble started in Rumania in connection with the cession of territory to Hungary. The Rumanian peasants rebelled against the Government and there were signs that the country was heading for a civil war. The pro-Nazi Prime Minister of Rumania appealed to Hitler for help and the Nazi Dictator ordered his troops to march into Rumania and occupy that country in the interest of peace. This decided the fate of Rumania. With the occupation of Rumania by the Nazi troops that country became a district of Germany. The Rumanian Government did Hitler's bidding and the Gestapo dealt with all the anti-Nazi groups and individuals in the country in their customary manner.

On September 4, the United States transferred 50 destroyers to Great Britain and in return she secured air and naval bases in British possessions in the Atlantic.

These bases were leased to the U. S. A. for 99 years. Britain was in urgent need of destroyers to protect her convoys and so the United States destroyers were welcomed heartily by the Royal Navy. Though the transfer of destroyers was an insignificant incident in comparison with the mighty events that were happening over the British Isles, it went to prove the cordial relations between the two English speaking countries. It also made known to the world that the United States was ready to render all possible help to Britain to enable her to win the war.

In the meanwhile Hitler was busy planning his diplomatic offensive. In order to combat the gesture of British-American friendship that was exemplified in the destroyer-deal, Hitler was trying to bring Japan into the Axis. Negotiations and talks were going on between Germany and Japan for some time and the Japanese Foreign Minister paid a visit to Berlin to discuss certain points personally with Hitler. As a result of these talks Japan recognised Hitler's 'New Order' in Europe and in return Hitler recognized Japan's claim to establish her own order in Asia. Thus the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis came into being.

This Pact envisaged the division of the world among the three aggressive countries. Germany is to have the whole of Europe; Mussolini will be Emperor of all Africa and Japan will become the leader of the East. By joining the Axis, Japan demonstrated to the world that she was determined to continue her aggressive policy in the East and that she would not lose the opportunity offered by the war to grab whatever territory she could lay her hands on. Also it seemed that the Axis Powers wanted to frighten America by demonstrating their solidarity to destroy democracy. This Pact had one reaction. American opinion hardened against Japan and America decided not

to submit to the intimidation of the Axis Powers. For Hitler it was a success. He was able to keep Americans worrying about the situation in the Pacific. Japan's joining the Axis forced both Britain and America to keep a sufficient number of troops in their possessions in the Pacific. This prevented the British from using all their man power and materials against Hitler in Europe. Japan was given the task of carrying on a war of nerves in the East while Hitler went on with his aggression in the West. The pact made the problems confronting Britain more complicated and difficult. Britain has more possessions and interests in Asia than that of any other country. Next comes America. But at the time of the signing of the Berlin Rome Tokyo Axis Pact Britain was bearing the brunt of the German onslaught from the air. She was fighting against odds. She had lost the support of her allies and stood alone against the combined forces of Germany and Italy and the Quisling armies of the Axis in the occupied countries. It seemed that England was facing the whole world single handed. Though she hoped for material support from America, she was not certain of getting any immediately. The American people were undecided and public opinion in America was not unanimous in supporting President Roosevelt's third term. Russia seemed to be helping Hitler to further his aggressions in Europe. It was well known that Stalin did not in the least like the Berlin Rome Tokyo Axis Pact but it was too late to undo the mischief. It did not suit Stalin to break off relations with Hitler although he knew that Japan's joining the Axis made his position very delicate. He was presented with a fait accompli: he should either join the Tripartite Pact or should be prepared to fight Germany and Japan on two fronts. That was what the Pact meant to Stalin. In the Pact no mention was made of Russia's share in the

division of the world. It appeared that Russia was meant to be absorbed in Hitler's 'New Order' in Europe. This means that the whole of Western Russia, with the vast industrial and agricultural areas, will be under the direct domination of Germany, while Russia will be allowed her freedom to be master of the barren and snow-clad Siberia. Stalin decided to sit on the fence for the time being. This attitude of the Soviet Dictator only encouraged Hitler's designs in the Balkans.

By joining the Axis Powers, Japan hoped to impose her aggressive designs in the East, especially to Burma, French Indo-China, Borneo, Philippine Islands, East Indies, Siam, Sumatra, Malaya and the coast of China. She dreamed of establishing "Eastern Hegemony" now called Japan's New Order in the East. In short, Japan wanted to carve out an Empire in the East and she found that the European War which had embroiled all the Western Powers, had prevented the English and the Americans from actively resisting her designs in the East. She hoped that her neighbouring countries which were too weak to defend an invasion would surrender to her will just like the Balkan countries surrendered to the will of the Nazi Dictator. But Japan had been engaged in a long war with China for the last five years and she had not been able to achieve any appreciable success. Also she was not prepared to encounter a battle against the combined forces of Britain, America, Australia and the other small Eastern Islands. She knew that she was not playing a 'successful' game; at the same time she was encouraged by Germany's successes in the West. Her chances depended upon Germany's conquering the whole of Europe, and besides, the Russo German Pact assured her that Russia would not interfere with her designs in the East. She knew that she was gambling, but she did it.

Hitler had succeeded. He had forced the British to maintain strong forces in the Far East. Japan would prove at least of some nuisance value. Again, America would think twice before entering the war. If she entered the war, she should be prepared to fight against Japan in the East and to help Britain to carry on the war in the West. Hitler hoped that America would not risk so much to fight Britain's battles.

### Italy Attacks Greece

On October 4 the Dictators met at Brenner Pass. The official statement issued from Berlin regarding the meeting simply said that the Dictators were agreed on issues regarding the conduct of the war and the Axis was stronger than ever before. The events that followed the meeting said a different tale. Hitler must have been greatly dissatisfied with Mussolini's failure to launch the offensive in Libya. He must have taken Mussolini to task for failing to play his part. The defeat the *Luftwaffe* had suffered in the Battle of Britain was not pleasing to the Nazis and hence it was imperative that some thumbing victory must be won in some other field to serve as a screen to hide the defeat. The immediate result of the Brenner meeting was that Hitler began to press Marshal Petain to co-operate fully with Germany in her war against England. Mussolini ordered the Italian Press to carry on a vigorous propaganda against Greece. It seemed that Mussolini wanted to find some excuse to invade Greece which was within easy approach of the Italian forces in Albania. Mussolini must have thought that Greece could be easily over-run as it was a small country and as its forces were comparatively weaker. He depended upon the numerical superiority of his forces and the safe lines of communications through Albania to launch a victorious invasion of Greece. While

he was preparing the ultimatum to be presented to the Greek Government, the Italian Press accused Greece of helping the Allies to fight against Italy and Germany. Greece was accused of having offered facilities for the British troops and Navy in the Greek ports in the Mediterranean and of having allowed the British warships to use her territorial waters to put into action their aggressive designs against Italy. The Press gave out to the world some hints about the nature of the ultimatum that would be sent to Greece by the *Duce*. Along side with the Press campaign against Greece, concentration of Italian troops along the Albanian Greek frontier was observed. Extensive troop-movements were reported from Albania and this made known to the people of the world what was ahead. Mussolini was determined to invade Greece and the whole world was expectant. The Greeks who were fully aware of what was coming prepared to resist the invader. They were confident that with the assistance of Britain they would be able to rout the Italian forces and keep them away from the Greek soil. The British Government stood firm by the guarantee they had given to Greece.

On the 28th October the Italian Government sent an ultimatum to the Greek Government demanding passage for troops through Greece so as to occupy certain strategic Greek islands during the period of the war. The Italian Government accused the Greek Government of aiding the British and thus not observing strict neutrality. In the interest of Italian security and as a guarantee of Greek neutrality the Italian Government demanded of the Greek Government that the Italian armed forces should be allowed to occupy certain Greek islands and that the Greek Government should not obstruct the passage of

- troops. The Note also added that if the Italian forces encountered any resistance, such resistance would be met by arms and the Greek Government would assume responsibility for the consequences.

General Metaxas, the Greek Premier, replied to the Note saying that it amounted to a declaration of war on Greece and refused to surrender without giving fight. Thus the invasion of Greece by Italy commenced on the 29th of October, 1940.

Italy's attack on Greece was undoubtedly an unprovoked aggression. Mussolini's excuse for invading Greece was just similar to Hitler's excuse for invading Belgium and Holland. It seemed that Hitler had forced Mussolini's hand to strike at Greece immediately. During the three months just preceding the invasion of Greece, Mussolini was trying to pick up a quarrel with the Greeks, but he could not succeed. As a last resort he determined to be as unscrupulous as Hitler. By attacking Greece, Mussolini broke the pledge he gave to Greece at the time of Italy's declaration of war against England. He said, "I solemnly declare that Italy does not intend to drag in other peoples who are her neighbours into this conflict. Let Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Egypt and Greece take note of these words of mine." In spite of these solemn words the Duce invaded Greece. There is nothing much to comment on the action of the Fascist Dictator. The success of Hitler in Europe greatly undermined Mussolini's strength. He was only playing second fiddle to Hitler. It was a great fall to Mussolini, the giver of Fascism to Europe. He was shrewd enough to realise that if he opposed Hitler and joined the Allies he would disappear into oblivion and his country would be over-run by the Nazis. He knew full well the might of the German

war-machine, and being a next door neighbour to Germany, he dared not go against Hitler. By playing second fiddle to Hitler, the *Duce* kept his position in Italy and more-over he hoped to share in the spoils the Nazis would bring at the end of the war. In order to save his skin Mussolini plunged his country into the conflict. There is no doubt about the fate of Italy at the end of the war. If the Nazis win Italy will become a vassal state to the Third Reich, and if the Allies win Italy will cease to be a Great Power.

Different motives were attributed to Mussolini for invading Greece. But the main purpose was to dissipate the British forces stationed at Egypt. The Axis Powers knew that Britain would keep her pledge to Greece and would send forces from Egypt to assist the Greeks. When the British forces would become weaker in Egypt the Italians would launch their attack from Libya. That was the plan. Also the British Mediterranean Fleet would be called upon to help the Greeks in their fight against the Italians and so the Italians would be able to transport troops and materials to Libya to strengthen their forces there so as to achieve a definite victory when the attack would be launched.

The spreading of the war to Greece threatened the whole of the Balkans and the Near East. British people were greatly anxious to defend Egypt and Suez. If Egypt and Suez were to fall to the Germans, then that would be the beginning of the collapse of the British Empire. Without her Eastern possessions Britain would be starved to death, and it appeared that Hitler was decidedly aiming at striking the most vital centre of the British Empire. The invasion of Greece by Italy presented the British Cabinet with greater and acute problems. Britain declared that she

would honour her pledge to Greece and would send all possible help. The question was how much help Britain could give. At the time of the invasion of Greece Britain had been pounded by the *Luftwaffe* and many of her armament factories had suffered heavily thereby slowing down the production of war materials. She was virtually dependent on her Dominions and colonies for supplies of all kinds of war materials. Even this was not easy of access as the Nazis were intensifying the war at sea. Yet, Britain decided to go to the help of Greece. The British warships steamed into the Mediterranean and hampered Italian transport of supplies to Albania. Meanwhile the small Greek army fought fiercely with its traditional Spartan courage and hung back the invading forces. The first thrust of the Italian forces from Albania did not achieve any success. On the other hand the Italians began a losing battle against Greece. Mussolini's invasion of Greece was parallel to the Soviet invasion of Finland. After the first few days of fighting the Italians realised that the Greeks were rather a harder nut to crack than they imagined. In spite of the initial losses they threw in battalions after battalions only to be mowed down by the Greek guns and charged by the Greek bayonets. The war against Greece continued for five months resulting in tremendous losses to the Italian forces and glorious victories to the Greeks. But for the Nazi intervention at a later stage the invasion of Greece would have ended in Italian ignominy. From a purely military point of view the invasion of Greece was an inglorious defeat for Italy, for so long as Italy fought alone the gallant Greeks threw them back and besides carried the battle to the enemy's soil, and it was even feared in Rome that the Italians would be forced out of Albania in case the Nazis would not help.

While Mussolini was engaged in a losing battle against the Greeks, Hitler was preparing to dazzle the eyes of the world by attempting to gain a victory on the field of diplomacy. He roped in Hungary and Rumania into the "New Order" and announced to the world that those two countries had joined the Tripartite Pact. The next move was to rope in Bulgaria and Turkey. If Hitler could succeed in doing this he could have won the battle against Britain as well as against Russia. Once Russia is isolated from all her neighbours she can be easily attacked and defeated. This was the object of Hitler's move in the Balkans. This move was thwarted by the attitude of Russia. Stalin disapproved Hungary's joining the Tripartite Pact and he did not coerce Turkey into joining the Axis group. Again, Russia, Bulgaria and Turkey were greatly encouraged by the success gained by the Greeks against the Italians and this helped to stiffen the attitude of these countries against Hitler. The net result was Bulgaria refused to line up with Hungary and Rumania. Turkey stood firm to fight any aggression and Soviet Russia seemed to be trying to oust Hitler from the Balkans. For the time being Hitler's diplomatic drive failed. This was a defeat to Mussolini, for the Nazis could not go to the help of the Italians. This they could do only by attacking Yugoslavia, and it seemed that plans were not complete for such a drive. Bulgaria's refusal to join the Axis, protected the rear of the Greeks, and Yugoslavia's firm stand to resist aggression prevented the Nazi hordes from descending on Greece from the north. The situation was well suited for the Greeks to deliver heavy and massive blows on the Italians and this they did to the admiration of the whole world.

For the first time British assistance to Greece was given in the battle of Taranto. In order to effectively assist Greece against Italy it was necessary to cut off Italy's

sea communications to Albania and Libya. At the time when Italy invaded Greece she had six powerful battleships anchored at Taranto, one of the most important ports of Italy. So long as these battleships were allowed to have their way in the Mediterranean, they would enable Mussolini to transport a large quantity of men and material to Albania and thus provide the Italian forces fighting in Greece. Therefore the first task of the British Navy was to cripple the Italian Navy. With this object in view two of the British aircraft carriers, *The Illustrious* and *The Eagle*, steamed outside the Italian port under the cover of night. The bombers from the mother-ship took to the sky and when they were just over the Italian battleships, they released their torpedoes. The bombers launched a fierce attack and the enemy who was taken aback by the British attack could not defend properly. The result of the attack was that three of the six Italian battleships were severely damaged. This not only reduced the numerical superiority of the Italian fleet, but also made the British Navy supreme in the Mediterranean. The damage inflicted on the Italian battleships had a great effect on the Italian Navy. The Italian ships fought shy of the British Navy and were not at all prepared to give battle. The Italian sailors refused to sail across the Mediterranean with either troops or cargoes so long as the British ships were in the vicinity. It was a material and moral blow to the Italian Navy, and besides, it greatly slowed down the transport of Italian troops and materials to Albania and Libya. This in turn resulted in the defeat of the Italians in Greece as well as in North Africa. The battle of Taranto was not only a victory to the Royal Navy but also an Allied victory against the Italians. As it was the first blow struck at the enemy in the interest of Greece, it was the first victory for British arms in the battle for the freedom of Greece.

## Battle of Libya.

The first week of December 1940, found the Imperial Troops stationed in Egypt launching an attack against the forces of Marshal Graziani. The Italians had already occupied Sidi Barrani just inside the eastern border of Egypt. They had been moving slowly along the coast. The British were aware of the advances of the enemy, but did not go out to meet the enemy and give battle. The R. A. F. bombed the moving columns, the Navy shelled the troops marching along the coast, while British petrols conducted skirmishes to slow down the advance of the enemy. In the meanwhile, General Wavell the O-in-C of the Imperial forces in Egypt planned the attack against the Italians. The Italians stopped at Sidi Barrani and were constructing defences to consolidate and strengthen the port before preparing to launch an attack on Alexandria. In the midst of their preparations and constructions of defences the Italians were forced to defend themselves against the weight of the British attack. General Wavell's attack was well planned. After two days of severe fighting the Italians showed a clean pair of heels. Sidi Barrani was captured by the Imperial forces. By the 13th of December 20,000 Italian prisoners, among them were three generals, were taken and large quantities of war materials fell into the hands of the Imperial troops. Here it is better to remember that in all the battles fought in North Africa and Abyssinia against the Italians, Indian troops distinguished themselves for their valour and undaunted courage and earned the admiration of not only their countrymen but of the world.

The fall of Sidi Barrani was the signal for the lightning advance of the Imperial troops into Libya. The African campaign proved to the advantage of the Imperial troops. The Imperial troops advanced into Libya capturing Bardia,

and the Italians found their position very dangerous. The fall of Libya and the control of the Mediterranean by the British Navy cut off every kind of help from Italy and the Italian troops in Abyssinia were compelled to fight a losing battle. It was not done in a day. The progress made by the troops was slow, but they won all the battles and were able to wrest Abyssinia from Mussolini. Italian resistance in Abyssinia was over only in July, 1941, but the fall of Addis Ababa practically ended Italian domination over Abyssinia. On the 6th of May 1941 Haile Selassie triumphantly entered the capital of his kingdom which he left five years ago. Thus after five years of military domination Italy's African Empire crumbled.

In short, Mussolini was fighting a losing battle everywhere. The Imperial troops recaptured British Somaliland, drove the Italians from Italian Somaliland and Eritria, thus scoring a great victory in the numerous battles in East Africa. In the African war the Italians lost thousands of men killed, wounded and captured. According to Italian Official figures, the British took 244,000 Italian prisoners in the different battles in Africa.

The British victory in Libya, East Africa and Abyssinia removed the danger to Egypt and Suez for the time being. But it was hoped that Hitler would send the Nazi battalions to assist the Fascist and a fresh offensive would be launched by the combined forces of the Germans and Italians. General Wavell, who was in charge of the forces in Africa and who had won the admiration of the British Empire for his marvellous and Blitzkrieg attack against the immensely superior forces of the Italians was trusted to defeat any further enemy offensive in the African Front. The British Cabinet had complete confidence in the abilities

of General Wavell and they believed that the Italians would not resume a big offensive in North Africa just after their colossal defeat there.

### Collapse of Bulgaria

Since the failure of Hitler to force Bulgaria to sign the Tripartite Pact in November, 1940, Germans have been entering Bulgaria in large numbers. They entered Bulgaria to organise a Fifth Column there. The Bulgarian Government spoke bold words of defending the integrity of the country, but did not take any step to prevent the influx of Germans who poured into the country and reached out like an octopus to extend their hold over the military propaganda, police and the government itself.

In the meanwhile Hitler was massing large columns of Nazi troops on the Rumanian-Bulgarian border as if to suggest to the Bulgarian Government that he would invade their country if they would not yield to his wishes. Hitler was planning to strike terror into the hearts of the Bulgars to compel them to submit. In spite of all these attempts King Boris stood his ground and declared to the world that he would defend his country at any cost. But even King Boris could not check the influence of the Chiefs of the army over him. The Bulgarian militarists were decidedly pro-Nazi and they desired to join hands with Hitler in order to carve out a little territory from Greece and Turkey. The peasants of Bulgaria were pan-Slav and they looked to Moscow to give them a lead. Hitler won over the Bulgarian army and the army compelled King Boris to submit to Hitler's demands. Another factor that contributed to the moral collapse of Bulgaria was that she knew that neither England nor Russia would be able to assist.

her against a Nazi aggression. Even if England would have promised assistance she was not capable of rendering much help, and before help would come Bulgaria would have been over run by the Nazis who had already massed their troops on the border. In short, it was fear that made Bulgaria to fall an easy victim to Hitler's threats of invasion. When Hitler found that the Bulgarian Government had not the courage to resist his troops, he ordered his battalions to march into Bulgaria. He gave out to the world that he was occupying the country with the consent of the king and that his motive was to protect Bulgaria against a British invasion. Thus Hitler repeated the old story of protecting a weaker state against an imaginary invasion by the British and brought one more neutral State under his heel. The collapse of Bulgaria changed the prospects of a victory for the Greeks. Now it was certain that Hitler would not lose much time in coming to the assistance of Mussolini. There was only one barrier that still existed between his troops and Greece and that was Yugoslavia. Though the German Radio gave out to the world that the occupation of Bulgaria by the Germans was meant to prevent the spreading of the war to other countries, the world knew what the Germans really wanted. They wanted to embroil as many countries as possible in the struggle in order to grab more territory and materials to their advantage. The British blockade was telling upon the import of materials to Germany from overseas and so it was necessary for Hitler to rob the weaker States of Europe of everything that would be of use to him to continue the war. On the 2nd of March, 1941 the Nazis entered Bulgaria and from that date Bulgaria became a province of the Third Reich.

## America Enters the War

The month of March witnessed a momentous action by the President of the United States in furtherance of his policy of aiding the democratic countries of the world to fight Totalitarian States. On the 13th of March President Roosevelt signed the Lease Lend Bill. This bill was designed to help England and other countries to continue their fight against the dictators. The passing of the Lease Lend Bill by the American Congress was a magnificent victory for the Allies, at the same time it was a challenge to the Dictators of Europe. In a broadcast to the world President Roosevelt, referring to the Lease Lend Bill, said "the world has been told that we as a united nation realise the danger which confronts us and to meet that danger our democracy has gone into action." The American President made a sweeping denunciation of totalitarian aggression, and pledged all possible help to the democratic countries fighting Hitler and his Quislings. By passing the Lease and Lend Bill the United States entered the war against Hitler, but it was an undeclared war. Now it was quite obvious to Hitler that one of the main tasks of the German Navy should be to prevent American help reaching England for with the enormous material supplies from America, Britain would become sufficiently strong to turn the tables of the war to her advantage. Continued American help would increase the striking power of the British and would enable them to secure air superiority over the Germans. If this should happen, then Germany would have fought in vain and all the battles she had so far won would end in a colossal final defeat. Therefore for all purposes and intents Hitler was resolved to sink all ships carrying supplies to Britain from the New World. As a reply to America's passing of the Lease and Lend Bill, Hitler ordered his U boats to

Intensify their activities in the Atlantic. Also he sent two of his mightiest battleships, *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, to the Atlantic to act as commerce raiders. Though the British were confident that they would defeat Hitler in the Battle of the Atlantic, they fully realised the great havoc the German raiders were capable of causing. The British replied Hitler's announcement of a U boat campaign in the Atlantic by raiding and bombing the industrial areas in occupied France and Northern Germany. Thus the battle began on the sea as well as on the air. As I have already pointed out, the battle at sea and in the air will continue throughout the duration of the war, and perhaps, these battles may decide the final outcome of the conflict. Since air battles and sea battles are going on simultaneously with operations on land it will be difficult to give a connected chronicle of these battles. All the same important events, at sea and the air will be dealt with in detail in the following pages.

American action against the Dictators had a great moral effect on all the peoples of the world. The subjugated peoples of Europe saw a ray of hope stretching out to them from the New World asking them to be bold and courageous to strike at the Nazi tyrants when the next opportunity would arise. The peoples who were undergoing intolerable and inhuman sufferings at the hands of the Nazi bandits were convinced that America's active support to the Allies would quicken the final defeat of Hitler and thus would bring salvation to them. Even the Germans and the Italians realised the significance of American help to the Allies. They knew that the greatest industrial country of the world was determined to help all the nations fighting Hitler and Mussolini. They were convinced that continued material help from the United States would

prolong the war, and they feared that in a long war Germany would be compelled to accept defeat. Their fears were confirmed by frequent broadcasts from Rome which warned the people to be prepared for a long war. In spite of all the victories the Nazis won in Europe, the Germans were terribly afraid of the prospect of a long war and however hard the German Government may try to hide the real feelings of the German people, neutral observers brought to light the fact that the Germans dreaded enormous American help to the British.

### Yugoslavia

After commanding his U boat commanders to carry on a vigorous campaign against British shipping in the Atlantic, Hitler turned his attention to the Balkans. The only State in the Balkans that remained neutral was Yugoslavia and Hitler was determined to rope in that country into his "New Order". After the fall of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia found herself in a very dangerous position. She was surrounded on all sides by the Axis Powers. To her north and east the Germans had massed their mechanised forces and to the south and west she was threatened by Mussolini's forces which were then fighting against the Greeks. She knew full well that if she resisted Hitler's demand she would be over-run and destroyed, and she would share the same fate as that of other Balkan countries. While she was in a great fix, Hitler ordered the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia to go to Berlin and sign the Tripartite Pact. Prince Paul, the Regent, sent the Prime Minister to Berlin to sign the Pact. Prince Paul was clearly pro-Axis and thought that he would profit much by joining hands with Hitler. On the other hand the people of Yugoslavia strongly opposed the idea of joining the Axis Powers. They wanted to keep out of the conflict; at the same time were prepared to defend the

independence of the country with arms. They realised the might of the Nazi War Machine, still, they preferred to die on the battle field rather than to submit to Nazi domination. When the Prime Minister left for Berlin to have an audience with Hitler, the people requested him not to sacrifice the freedom of the country at any cost. But things took a different turn. Once in Hitler's clutches, the Yugoslavian Prime Minister must have found it difficult to escape. Hitler must have threatened the minister with an immediate invasion of his country and must have forced him to affix his signature to the Pact at the point of bayonet. He must have been tortured, like Dr Schuschnigg of Austria. The net result of the so called negotiations was that Yugoslavia signed the Tripartite Pact. The signing of the Pact virtually ended the existence of Yugoslavia as an independent state.

The news of the signing of the Pact was received in the country with a storm of indignation and protests from the people. They were huge demonstrations against the Cabinet of Prince Paul and there was anger raging in every heart at the treacherous act of the Prime Minister. The people's indignation resulted in a military *coup d'etat*. The Chiefs of the army with the assistance of some ministers captured the Cabinet and arrested all the ministers of Prince Paul's Cabinet and compelled the Regent to flee from the country. King Peter was installed on the throne and a new Government composed of military Chiefs and pro-British ministers was formed. The *coup d'etat* was so sudden that it took the whole world by surprise. Hitler was more surprised than any other statesman in the world. Change of Cabinet was a blow to the Tripartite Pact that was just signed by Prince Paul's Cabinet. Though the

new Government did not denounce the Pact Hitler knew that he would not succeed in having his own way with the new Government. Therefore the only way opened to him was to invade Yugoslavia. This will solve many of his problems. In the first place he will be able to assist his partner in his fight against the Greeks. secondly he will capture the material resources of Yugoslavia and thirdly he will end the menace of neutrality in Europe. In a way Hitler lost Yugoslavia's signature to the Tripartite Pact only to gain the whole country. The one set back he suffered was that he was forced to fight in order to conquer Yugoslavia he could not carry out a bloodless conquest as he did in other countries.

With dramatic suddenness Hitler declared war on Greece and Yugoslavia and the Nazi battalions marched into Yugoslavia on the 6th of April. Hitler put forth the stale excuse of German minorities being maltreated by the Yugoslavs under the Government of King Peter. It is really strange that in every country Hitler finds the Germans disliked and hated and treated badly. Does it not suggest that Germans all over the world possess qualities that inspire hatred. Viewed from this angle on the authority of Hitler himself it can be said that Germans cannot inspire admiration or appreciation or any other lovable and humane instinct in human nature they can only make themselves hated and scorned by all who come in contact with them. When Hitler admits this fact when he says that German minorities are treated badly in all European countries there need be no doubt about the brutalities the Germans commit in the occupied countries. It is the brutality of the Germans who behave like cannibals when they conquer a weaker state that make them universally despised. No better example of the Nazis lust for blood and conquest.

than the diabolical invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece can be given. Regarding Greece the Germans had no excuse to give for their declaring war on that country. Even when Greece was fighting the Italians, Berlin maintained regular diplomatic relations with Athens. Greece did not present an acute German minority problem to Hitler, yet Hitler declared war on Greece on the flimsy excuse that Greece was an ally of Britain. In short, Hitler was determined to conquer the whole of Europe, nay the whole world if possible, and he was goading on the German people to spill their blood and cause unfold suffering to millions of people all over the world in order to satisfy his lust for power and conquest.

The first impact of the German onslaught on Yugoslavia was stubbornly resisted by the Serbs, but the Germans possessed superiority in men and materials and besides the German Air Force which was of tremendous strength when compared to the small Yugoslavian Force, won the battles for the Germans. After fifteen days' hard fighting Yugoslavia surrendered thereby compelling the Greeks to bear the brunt of both the German and the Italian onslaught. Though the people of Yugoslavia were conquered by the Nazi hordes it should be remembered that they, being fully conscious of the German might, chose to give battle before losing the freedom of the country which they gained at the end of the last war, and the world cannot forget that stark fact that those brave people laid down their lives at the alter of freedom.

### A Speck of light

The Second World War brought nothing but misfortune to the Allies from the very beginning. The Germans were terribly prepared and from the successive victories they had

won throughout the struggle one cannot but admire the thoroughness of Hitler's plans for conquest. From a purely military stand-point Hitler had won victory after victory, while the Allies, whatever may be the reasons, sustained defeats on all fronts except one. Throughout the last two years of war England had proved repeatedly her superiority over the Germans at sea and for the English there was nothing but their naval victories to be proud of. Amidst the heroic but losing battle the Greeks and Yugoslavians were fighting on land, the British Navy scored an admirable victory in the Mediterranean. In the first week of April the British warships patrolling the "Italian Lake" sighted a few Italian warships and cruisers near the Greek coast and lured them into battle. The Italian squadron consisting of battleships, cruisers and destroyers advanced towards the British warships hoping to win an easy victory. It must have been possible that the Italian Naval Commanders must not have known the real strength of the British squadron, or must have belittled the might of the British Navy stationed at the Mediterranean bases. When the Italian ships were within range of the British guns, Admiral Cunningham's battleships opened fire. In the battle that ensued the Italians had a colossal defeat. Three of the heaviest Italian cruisers were sent to the bottom of the sea, two destroyers were sunk and one of her best and mightiest battleships was damaged. The Italian ships showed a clean pair of heels and thus justified their reputation for speed. This was one of the heaviest blows that Britain delivered on the Axis Naval Power and it can be easily said that this Mediterranean encounter resulted in the crippling of the Italian Navy. The Italians had already lost a few battleships in previous encounters and thus had lost their offensive power at sea. Though the British victory in the Medi-

Mediterranean demonstrated that Britain remained master of the seas, it could not stem the avalanches of Nazi troops streaming south-ward to Greece from Yugoslavia. The defeats sustained by the Allies on land and air made them realise that Naval Power alone could not secure the defeat of Hitler. And England cannot possess a huge land army and so she cannot but depend upon her Naval and Air superiority, which she hopes to acquire, for the final victory.

### April and May

The month of April 1941 saw the Naval victory of Cape Matapan narrated in the previous pages, eclipsed by the surprisingly rapid British reverse in the African theatre. The British people were heaving a sigh of relief over the achievements of the Imperial Troops in Libya and it seemed that the danger to Egypt and Suez was averted, and besides Britain had secured a stronger hold in the Mediterranean by sweeping away the Italian forces out of Cyrenaica. The fact that Britain considered the success of the Imperial Troops in Libya as a major victory and one that gave Britain a strategical control over the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East was evident from the Prime Minister's statement that with the capture of Benghazi all threat to Egypt and Suez had disappeared. Therefore the unexpected German Italian offensive against Benghazi from Tripoli was more than a shock to the British. It was one of the surprises of the war and the evacuation of Benghazi was the severest blow to British complacency as it came from a quarter where they felt stronger and safer. The utter collapse of the Imperial Forces to hold the positions they had captured after great sacrifices brought the threat to Suez nearer. The officer commanding the German Italian forces General Rommel, seemed to have assured his men that they would be the master of the ~~Suez Canal~~ <sup>Suez</sup> within a fortnight.

commencement of the offensive, and the rapidity with which the Imperial troops withdrew from one town to another convinced the world that the Germans were bent upon reaching the Suez in the new offensive they had launched in Libya. Though it is impossible to explain the sudden collapse of the British occupation of Libya, the fact remains that, in spite of the defeat of the Italian forces in Libya and Abyssinia, Germany is capable of initiative and possesses superior armaments to launch a Blitzkrieg attack against superior enemy forces. It may be argued that part of the Imperial forces were hastened to the assistance of the Greeks and thus the British Troops occupying Libya were insufficient to put up a strong resistance against superior mechanized units of the enemy forces. If we admit this argument it is obvious that the British did not expect an offensive in Libya just on the heels of the Italian debacle in that very theatre of war. This in turn questions the efficiency of the British Intelligence Service. Were the officers commanding the Imperial Forces unaware of the German and Italian forces stationed at Tripoli? It seems that despite the vigilance of the British Mediterranean Fleet, the Nazis were able to cross the sea and land troops on the African soil to assist the Italians. The Germans adopting the tactics that were used by General Wavell to drive off the Italians, swept in an arc through the desert, occupied Bardia and reached Sollum on the Egyptian Frontier. Tobruk, however, remained in British hands. Up to this time it has not surrendered to the enemy. The British are using Tobruk to harass the enemy concentrations and to destroy the lines of communication behind the enemy lines. Though the gallantry of the Imperial forces cannot be questioned it should be admitted that battles are not won by evasions. to repeat Mr. Churchill.

In the Balkans the Allies suffered defeat. The Germans drove a wedge between the Greek and the Yugoslav armies and thus broke the main defence line and then descended with lightning speed to Athens. The Greeks surrendered and the British troops withdrew to Crete. The Greek King had already gone with his Government to Crete, to conduct the war from that island. Thus in Libya as well as in the Balkans Hitler scored a victory over the Allies. This victory was of the greatest strategical importance to Hitler, for with the Balkan countries under his heel he could dash to Turkey and then to Syria and Iraq and could launch an offensive through Libya and Egypt and Suez into Arabia to synchronise with his Balkan drive. Thus Hitler was in a position to translate into reality a possible pincers-movement to smash the Empire life line in the Near East.

There was ample evidence to show that Hitler was contemplating a move to Iran oil fields as soon as his troops were free from engagements in the Balkans. Nazi diplomats were active in Turkey to rope in that country and secure the passage of troops to Syria which was slipping into Axis control. A good many Germans had already infiltrated into Syria and Iraq and were very active in creating a fifth column in the Muslim countries. The first proof of German fifth column activities in Iraq was the *coup d'etat* of Rashid Ali. Rashid Ali, an army man, seized the Government and dismissed the former Regent, Emir Abdul Illah. At that moment it was considered a domestic affair but it did not escape the shrewd observer as a significant Nazi move. The Nazi complicity in Iraq was past a doubt as the *coup d'etat* coincided with the German Spring offensive in Libya as well as in the Balkans. The Germans and Italians in Syria were using the *para*-dromes in that country as if they belonged to them. The

so-called Vichy co-operation with Germans amounted to active assistance to fight the British. The first evidence of this active support was illustrated in the manner in which Vichy allowed the Germans to conduct anti British propaganda in the Near East from Syria. The Greek debacle, the Libyan reverse and the coup d'etat in Iraq constituted the greatest threat to the oil-fields in Iraq and Iran. There was every reason to believe that Hitler would stake everything to smash the British positions in the Near East and capture the oil wells of Iran and Iraq, and then to proceed to Baku. Hence it was clear that Rashid Ali was a Nazi agent and was preparing to assist a Nazi invasion of that country. The loss of Iran and Iraq will certainly secure the defeat of the Allies. In order to avert the imminent threat to Iraq which, if neglected, might have added one more stunning blow to the Allies, the British decided to send troops to Iraq to protect their interests in that country. At first Rashid Ali welcomed this move, but soon he changed his mind and offered resistance to the British troops. He threw off his mask and openly requested Hitler to go to his aid. Now it was abundantly clear that the rebellion in Iraq was a Nazi move.

Hitler did not send much help to Iraq though the Germans in Syria sent guns and rifles and other war materials to enable the Iraqi forces to continue their resistance to the British. Also German planes, from their Syrian bases, assisted in bombing the British positions. This much was not sufficient to inflict a major defeat on the British forces, and besides, Hitler was refused passage through Turkey. The alternative was either to attack Turkey or to smash the defences of Crete, and Cyprus and then launch a sea-battle in the Eastern Mediterranean to cripple the British Navy, and after achieving all that, land

troops in Syria and then proceed to Iraq to help Rashid Ali. Both these moves did not promise an immediate victory and hence Hitler did not respond to Rashid Ali's appeal for help; all the same he launched his attack on Crete.

The Battle for Crete was a trial of strength between the Navy and the Air-force. The German attack on Crete began with intense bombing of Suda Bay, where there was an anchorage for the largest ships. The British had landed troops in Crete as early as November, 1940 and it can be expected that they might have strengthened the defences of the island. The pounding of the Suda Bay and the neighbouring aerodromes by the *Luftwaffe* was the beginning of the great air offensive that the Germans launched before landing their troops on the island. From the very commencement of this War, Germans had demonstrated their superiority in the air. The fall of Belgium, Norway, Poland and other countries was mainly due to the aggressive offensive of the *Luftwaffe*. Now the German air-offensive on Crete foreshadowed the fall of Crete unless the British could despatch a very large squadron of R.A.F. to defeat the *Luftwaffe*. The easy way in which the Germans bombed the sea-ports and aerodromes in Crete indicated the absence of sufficient R.A.F. planes over Crete. The British were depending upon their Naval Power to defeat the Germans in Crete but in this they were completely taken aback by Hitler's new tactics of landing a large number of troops borne by air. After a severe hammering of the aerodromes in Crete, Hitler landed in that island nearly 7000 air-borne troops to launch an attack on land. This large number was over and above the hundreds of parachute troops dropped. When a sufficiently strong German force was landed on Crete, this force supported by the *Luftwaffe* assailed the British positions

on the island. Simultaneously with the sending of troops by air, Hitler tried to land troops by boats. He used small boats, but many of them. Though he suffered tremendous losses in this particular enterprise he was able to keep the British Navy busy with sinking and attacking the German troop-boats, and thus the British battle-ships were unable to render effective assistance to their land-forces operating against the Germans who attempted to capture the port from inland. The battle for Crete raged furiously for ten days; the Greeks and the British troops defended their position valiantly, but in the end they were compelled to surrender to the superior forces of the enemy. It was the lack of proper air force to support land and sea operations that compelled the Allies to accept defeat. Crete was one more demonstration, that only superiority in the air could ensure final victory in this mechanized war.

The month of May, provided more than one notable incident. On the 12th May, Rudolf Hess, Hitler's Deputy and the Nazi Prince of Wales, landed in Scotland. Hess actually baled out of his plane on a Scottish farm and was taken prisoner by the British Guards. Rudolf Hess' flight to Scotland was the most sensational story of the war and it dumb-founded the whole world, particularly the German people. The real purpose of Hess' flight to Scotland cannot be brought to light before the conclusion of the war, and even if the British Government are in the know of the real object of his flight to Scotland, it is certain it will not be made public as long as the war lasts. We were given to understand that Herr Hess had differences with the Fuehrer regarding the German attitude towards Russia, and that Hess was strongly opposed to Russo-German collaboration in any form. Hess, the idealist in the Nazi Camp, could not agree with the opportunist policy of the Fuehrer and

besides, the trend of events inside and outside Germany convinced the Deputy of the final defeat of Hitler, and finding that he was powerless to prevent Hitler from hurrying to his doom, he escaped from the Nazi nest. This was one of the many explanations offered for Hess' desertion of his countrymen. The British, had called Rudolf Hess 'a murderer, a swain and roque' and now Hitler called him a traitor and said that he was insane to have taken the step he took. To the German people who worshipped Hess, his desertion was a great blow, it must have shaken their morale and must have forced them to think that there must have been something rotten in the Nazi core which gave room to such happenings. Anyway this incident did not shake Hitler and his other associates so severely as to make them alter their plans of conquest. The Nazi propaganda Chief, Dr. Goebbels must have had a hard time to convince the German people that the 'Hess incident' was not to be taken seriously, though it was unfortunate for Germany that such a popular leader should desert them at a moment when they were engaged in a life and death battle with their enemies. In spite of Hitler's denunciation of Hess as a traitor, it is quite possible that Nazi leaders must have some sinister motive in sending Hess to Scotland and making all the fuss about his insanity for the one thing that we know about the Nazis is that they will never allow their enemies to get even a ghost of an idea of their motives. And when we consider that Hess should have selected Scotland out of all the countries of the world, as his asylum, it is evident that Hitler had a definite purpose in planning the 'Hess incident'. Whatever the truth may be, the incident provided one of the most sensational stories of the war.

The second notable incident was the sinking of the *Bismarck*, the 30,000 ton German battleship. The *Bismarck*

was the best battleship Germany possessed and it can be rightly said that she was the apple of the German Admiralty's eye. More than once Hitler had spoken of the *Bismarck* as the unsinkable ship and the German people were very proud of her. The British Navy scored a historic victory in the sinking of the *Bismarck*, though the loss of the *Bismarck* did not stop the German sea offensive against the British merchantmen. With the sinking of the *Bismarck* the German Navy was greatly crippled. All the same the British had paid a high price to secure the mastery of the ocean. In spite of the Navy's victories in various naval encounters the stark fact remains that the British shipping losses are continuing to be severe. The gravity of the situation was pointed out by President Roosevelt when he mentioned in his fire side talk that the German U-boats were taking a toll of British shipping at three times its replacement rate. This indicates that the Battle of the Atlantic remains the star turn of the Nazi war programme and that Hitler is bent upon destroying the British Navy at any cost.

By the end of May the Crete campaign was over. One of the bastions in the Eastern Mediterranean that barred Hitler's way to the Suez Canal had fallen. The British position in the Middle East was greatly threatened. It was feared that Hitler's next move would be to Syria where his men had already done spade work. Hitler is one of the best strategists the world has produced, and he will not fail to exploit the advantages gained by a victory however small it may appear. With the whole of the Balkans under his heels and with the active co operation of Vichy in Syria, Hitler might have marked out Syria as the most favourable jumping off ground for his march to Baghdad.

The Berlin-Baghdad programme has a sinister and familiar ring. This programme was envisaged by Bismarck and Kaiser in the past and it is just possible that one of Hitler's ambitions may be to realise the Berlin-Baghdad vision of his predecessors. The most opportune moment for translating the Berlin-Baghdad vision into a reality presented itself just after the fall of Crete. There were two possibilities of developing an offensive towards Baghdad. The first was through Turkey and the second through Syria. Hitler had already failed to rope in Turkey into his "New Order", and he knew that it would be futile to make an attempt to coerce President Ineunu, the man who defied the combination of Lloyd George, President Wilson and Clemensue at the Peace Conference, into giving a free passage to German troops. Instead of waging a war against the Turks, Hitler will choose the easier way of occupying Syria with the connivance of Vichy and then will proceed to Baghdad. The possibility of such a move was not at all lost on the British. Therefore as soon as Rashid Ali was driven out of Iraq, the British forces with the co-operation of the Free French forces decided to occupy Syria. This was one of the wisest steps taken by the British Government. Mr. Churchill had given Marshal Petain a long rope, still, however, it was becoming as clear as crystal that Marshal Petain was nothing more than a pawn in the hands of Admiral Darlan, who was playing the Nazi game in France. The British were aware of the Nazi machinations in Syria, but they were waiting for an opportune moment to strike. Now they were freed from all engagements and there was some breathing space before encountering the next Nazi move.

On the 8th of June the British and the Free French forces entered Syria. The Vichy forces resisted and hence

the British were compelled to fight the French who were their ally at the commencement of the war. It was a painful operation, but the situation demanded a successful completion of the operation. The progress of the British in Syria was very slow and it was explained that for political reasons the British did not launch a severe attack against the Vichy forces. On many occasions they brought home to the Vichy troops the futility of resistance in order to make them surrender without much bloodshed, and only when the Vichy forces continued to resist, an offensive was launched against them. Though the operations continued for more than a month, the British and the Free French forces were successful in smashing the Vichy resistance and thus freeing the country from Axis domination. In taking the initiative in Syria the Allies upset the Berlin Baghdad programme of Hitler, at least for the time being and besides, strengthened their position in the Middle East.

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## (PART IV)

### Crusade against Bolshevism<sup>73</sup>

The incredible has happened at last. The 'eternal friendship' between the peoples of Russia and Germany was broken by the invasion of Russia by the Nazis. In the small hours of Sunday morning, 22nd June, 1941. The invasion of Russia by the Nazis took the wind out of many a statesman. It caught Russia unprepared with the result that the first impact of the German offensive forced the Russians to withdraw to the old Russian border. It appeared to the world that with the signing of the Russo-German Pact in 1939, Hitler and Stalin had forgotten their mutual antipathies and had come to certain definite understanding with regard to the policy to be pursued in Europe. It seemed that the two dictators had joined hands to destroy the British Empire first and the democratic principle second. I have already pointed out in my earlier books *Hitler's War, Part III*, and the *Biography of Stalin*, that Stalin was driven to Hitler's camp by the democracies, and the Russo-German Pact was nothing more than a temporary truce between the peoples of Germany and Russia. A war between these two peoples was inevitable and Hitler, as well as Stalin, knew that the peace of Europe and security of their respective countries could not be and will not be secured so long as Nazi Germany and Bolshevist Russia lived as neighbours. Thus the Russo-German Pact helped Hitler to destroy the small Balkan States, while it helped Stalin to keep the Nazis as far away from the Russian soil as was possible. At the same time these two dictators were waiting and preparing for the day of reckoning.

From the broadcasts of Stalin and other Russian statesmen it appears that Russia was caught unprepared. M. Molotov said, "This un-heard-of attack on our country is without example in the history of civilised nations." Such statements from such a hard-boiled diplomat as M. Molotov, may convey the impression that Russia did not expect the invasion so early. It is probable that even Hitler must not have thought of attacking Russia at that stage, but he was compelled to attack Russia because of the failure of his Fifth Column activities in Syria and Iraq. The war so far has been won by the Nazis by their policy of encircling the victims one by one and striking them, one at a time, with the full weight of the German Military Machine. Knowing, as he did, of the tremendous manpower and resources of Russia, Hitler would not have invaded that country if he had succeeded in establishing his domain in Syria and Iraq. With these countries under his heel, he would have roped in Iran, whose ruler was definitely pro-Nazi, and would have advanced to the Caucasus through the back-door. This would have been an easier victory and he would not have been required to sacrifice enormous quantities of men and materials as he is compelled to do now.

time; and, as Hitler himself observed, the German High Command could no longer vouch for the conclusion of the war in the west, particularly as regards aircraft. This meant that Hitler was not strong enough to wage a war against England. In such circumstances the temptation to turn to the east where 120 German divisions were holiday-making on the Russo-German frontier, to secure a military victory was very strong. On the economic side of the lure—the corn of the Ukraine and the oil of the Caucasus—was obvious. The corn of the Ukraine might have been got by blackmail but Hitler has always been coveting the soil. He wanted to incorporate the Ukraine in the Reich. This he has made abundantly clear in his *Mein Kampf*. The way to the oil-fields of the Caucasus without an invasion of Russia was made impossible by the failure of his Fifth Column in Syria and Iraq; and hence the only way opened to Hitler was to invade Russia or to sit silent. To sit silent will not suit the Nazis, for the Nazis can exist only in continuous warfare. Again there was the third motive—the psychological. Hitler thought that a war against Bolshevism would divide opinion in the United States, would appeal powerfully to Franco's Spain, and would even shake the resolution of some elements in Great Britain. Hitler knew that Britain and America held Communism in terrible hatred and perhaps, thought that his crusade against Communism would rally a large section of the British and American people to his camp and thus would create a definite split in the war effort of the democratic countries. It is past a doubt that Britain and America hate communism in any form, at the same time they have come to look upon Hitlerism as a deadlier and more powerful enemy than Communism and in a war against Hitlerism they are prepared even to collaborate with the Communists if the latter

will fight the Nazis. This was evident from the attitude of Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt towards Soviet Russia. During the short period of nearly two years when the Russian people were enjoying the sunshine of blissful German friendship, the British Envoy in Moscow was trying to bridge the differences between the two Governments. Britain, perhaps, might have been hoping to impress upon Stalin the futility of trusting Hitler and his treaties. Mr. Churchill had warned Stalin on many occasions that Hitler would strike at Russia when a favourable opportunity would arise, and judging from the turn the events took, we can say that the British Premier was right in warning Stalin of the imminent danger of a German invasion of his country.

Hitler ordered the invasion of Russia with the blow of trumpets and fanfare and announced to the world that he was launching a crusade against Communism. He declared that Communism stood in the way of human progress and civilisation and unless Communism was swept off the face of the earth the world would know no peace. Though he was successful in rallying all his Quislings to the standard of 'Anti Bolshevism', he failed to impress the democracies. On the other hand the democracies hastened to extend their helping hand to Russia in her fight against Hitler and Hitlerism. In a way the German invasion of Russia raised the strength of the Allies. In Russia they found 160,000,000 people to carry on a vigorous war against the Nazis, their only part in the battle was the equipment of the Russians. The vast resources of Russia, no doubt, can materially strengthen the Allies and the vastness of the country will enable Stalin to fight a long and never ending battle so long as his armies are assured of supplies from the democratic countries. The Russian military strength was a mystery; after the bad performance of the Russians in Finland

the world did not consider the Russians capable enough to stem a weighty German advance, still however, it was possible to rely upon the traditional Russian stubbornness. After the poor performance of the Red Army in Finland, Stalin started a vigorous reorganization of the fighting forces, but he could not do it in a day. It required some time and before he could complete the work Hitler launched the attack. Hitler must have known the weakness of the Red Army, and hence must have decided on the invasion of Russia before the fighting forces of that country would be in full trim for a defensive battle.

Mr. Winston Churchill broadcasting on the same day when Hitler invaded Russia said that Britain was willing to give all possible help to the Russian people to fight the invaders. His words had a powerful effect on the part of the American opinion that was still fluid. Mr. Churchill was too shrewd for Hitler and he swiftly shelled Hitler's crusade by categorically denouncing Hitler's 'Anti Communist' colour. He said, 'This is not a class war. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this nothing will turn us, nothing'. This timely speech convinced the Russians that Britain would help them to fight the Nazis who had treacherously invaded their country, and also it hardened American opinion against the Nazis. Mr. Churchill's lead was followed by President Roosevelt who promptly assured Russia that his country would give all aid to the Russians.

Mr. Churchill's words vigorously excluded every hint of false optimism. He said that the attack on Russia gave no ground so far for neither optimism nor the reverse. The addition of the huge population of Russia to Germany's enemies did not bring an Allied victory nearer. Everything depended on the form and degree of Russia's resistance.

Here early collapse would leave Hitler stronger than ever and the legend of his invincibility would gain new currency. Besides, he would secure immediate access to the natural resources he needed, and he would be able to divert to service elsewhere the greater part of a million and a half men he had been keeping for months under arms on the Soviet frontier. The Prime Minister warned the British people and their allies that those contingencies must be reckoned with and they must have strategic and political plans ready against the event of German success in the East as well as a German failure.

Germany's invasion of Russia had certain definite political consequences in the Far East. Japan had understanding with both Berlin and Moscow, but Japan had already joined the Tripartite Pact and the Anti-Comintern Pact, and it was possible that she would try to strike at Russia from the back if the Germans achieved a spectacular victory against the Russians. Japan was waiting to act in her own interest in spite of her understanding with Russia. With the commencement of hostilities between Germany and Russia, Japan assumed an aggressive attitude in the Far East. The democratic countries realised that they would be forced to face a grave situation in the Far East and, unless they adopted a strong policy towards Japan, they would lose everything in the Far East. Britain and America were determined to resist any kind of aggression by Japan in the Far East.

By invading Russia Hitler has followed the footsteps of Napoleon. In spite of the wide divergence between these two men, their career of aggression had followed quite parallel lines. Both Napoleon and Hitler were baffled by Britain; both of them found that Britain would never accept defeat unless her very soil was invaded and her

cities razed to the ground both of them failed to accomplish this great task which alone could secure a final victory, and both of them in desperation turned to the East. History, strangely enough has an uncanny way of repeating itself, it has repeated itself after a lapse of one and a quarter century. Today Hitler has ordered his Panzer divisions to march into Russia in the same way in which Napoleon marched his Grande Armée 129 years ago. The invasion of Russia decreed the doom of Napoleon will it do the same in the case of Hitler? Will Moscow burn once again? Will the terrible Russian winter freeze the Germans death and thus force Hitler to withdraw from the Soviet soil? Only future events can answer such questions. But one thing is certain and that is Hitler is not going to have an easy victory in Russia and unless Hitler conquers the whole of Russia including the vastness of Siberia, Hitler can never secure the mastery of Europe.

Hitler's invasion of Russia has surprised thousands but this latest German aggression has convinced the people of the world that Hitler is Hitler and there can be no change in him. Though Hitler has thrown many a surprise during the past few years of his dictatorship, he fundamentally remains the same. Hitler is without any shadow of doubt a man with an *idea fixe*—and that idea is amply illustrated by the Aryan racial theory of the Nazis. Hitler desires nothing short of world domination and he will not hesitate to employ any amount of treachery and conceit, for him the end justifies the means however foul and heinous they may be.

Here is what Hitler wrote about Stalin and his Government in his now famous book *Mein Kampf*. 'One must not forget that the rulers of present day Russia are common blood bespattered criminals that we are concerned with a

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## German Blitzkrieg in Russia

The sudden German invasion of Russia had the advantages of surprise and hence the Germans achieved considerable success and caused the Russians heavy casualties. The Germans launched their offensive on a front 1700 miles wide extending from the Black to the White sea. It was a colossal struggle unprecedented in the history of the human race. Even Napoleon's march into Russia 129 years ago dims into insignificance before the gigantic battle that is raging in Russia. In the first twelve days of his Blitzkrieg against the Soviet, Hitler had driven the Bolsheviks to the pre September 1939 border. Whatever Russia had gained in Poland by the partition and the Baltic States which she annexed were lost to her before the first phase of the German Blitzkrieg came to a halt. Germany was not alone in the war against Russia. Hitler had forced all the subjugated nations to declare war against the Bolsheviks. With Hitler marched the armies of Rumania, Hungary, Finland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Vichy-France and Franco's Spain. The whole of Europe was mobilised against the people of the Soviet Union, and hence there is no wonder that the stubborn fighters of the Soviet Republic were compelled to withdraw to the proper Russian soil. Hitler's object in suddenly attacking Russia was to roll up the Russian armies as he did the Allies in the West, to drive great wedges in the Soviet front, and by seizing the three main cities of Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev, destroy Russian resistance before the Red Army had recovered from the first shock. But in this Hitler was beaten. The Germans announced that the Russian campaign would be completed in 10 weeks, but with all their spectacular successes they were no near their objective at the end of ten weeks.

Russians offered valiant and stubborn resistance to the invaders and fought every inch of ground." The losses on both sides were tremendous, but the Germans could not destroy the Red Air-Force as they did in Poland." They also failed to annihilate the Red Army. The Russians withdrew in order and maintained their defence lines. Stalin adopted the same policy adopted by the Russians against Napoleon. He advised his people to adopt the "scorched earth" policy, to destroy everything that would be of use to the enemy, and to carry on intensive guerilla warfare in places occupied by the enemy. He said, "Unbearable conditions must be created for the enemy and all his accomplices in the invaded areas. Nothing animate or inanimate must be left behind, which is likely to prove of the least help to the invaders. Guerilla warfare must be adopted on a mass scale and all means of transport and communications must be demolished wholesale. Then there are the vast spaces of Russia into which the defenders can retreat and the invader can be lured to his doom". Also Stalin appealed to his people to defend their soil, their 'Fatherland', and the new social order that they had established. The "Fatherland Phase" deeply stirred the people of the Soviet Union and they marched as one man to destroy the Nazi invader. They knew that the Nazis were ferocious fighters and were equipped with the most modern destructive weapons, all the same they were confident that they would be able to stem the invading Germans and drive them back to their homes to weep out their sorrows. The Russians knew that the struggle would be hard and long and that they were up against the mightiest military machine of the world, nevertheless they were prepared to sacrifice their all to cripple and destroy the invincible army of Germany. They knew that their forefather had accomplished in the past the incredible feat of driving back the *Grande Armee* of

Napoleon, and they were confident that they could likewise hunt back the German Panzer divisions. They accepted the initial reverses as inevitable because of the treacherous attack but fought every inch of ground stubbornly. They carried the "scorched earth" policy to such perfection that whenever the Germans captured a village or town they found that there was nothing left for them. A German officer, Major Lehman said "We are fighting against soldiers who, whether from blind hatred political fanaticism, soldierly obedience or simple fear, fight with a tenacious sullenness often when situation is hopeless, destroy everything, even their clothing, in order to prevent anything useful from falling into our hands."

### Battle of Smolensk

After a month of intense fighting Germans could not claim the capture of even a single key city of Russia. Their advance slowed down and a stalemate resulted. The German Radio explained the lull in the fighting by saying that numerous "pockets" of Russian Soldiers were harassing the Germans in the rear and the lines of communications and transport behind the German lines were becoming more and more difficult due to the difference in the gauge of the rails in Russia and due to the mountainous nature of the country. Now the tall talk of finishing the Russian campaign in 10 weeks was substituted by the German's desire to annihilate the Red Army. The Germans did not desire great territorial gains. This change in the desire of German troops was brought about by the gallant resistance of the Russian soldiers at the front as well as in the rear of the German lines. The Russian "pockets" behind the German lines were not isolated groups of soldiers waiting to be conquered by the Germans. These pockets were composed

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of gallant fighters detached from the main army acting as guerilla bands and carrying on a death-defying battle against the Nazis. On many occasions these "pockets" rejoined the main Russian Army in spite of Goebbels' encircling and annihilating them through the ether.

A lively diversion during this period of lull in the Eastern Front was caused by the occupation of Iceland by the American army and navy. Iceland lies north west of England, and between America and the British Isles. If Iceland were to fall into the hands of the Germans, they would have made capital use of the strategic position of the island to launch air-Blitz on England as well as America. The occupation of Iceland was of prime importance to the defence of America. In ordering the American troops to occupy Iceland, President Roosevelt had challenged the Axis. Though America did not desire to enter the war, she wanted to know whether the Germans dared to challenge their right of 'freedom of the seas'. Just before the occupation of Iceland by the Americans Germans tried to build up a Fifth Column there. A German plot to erect a secret wireless station in Iceland was discovered and a party of Germans who approached the island in a Norwegian ship was captured and interned. Germans were planning to land troops in Iceland, but the Americans were ahead of them.

While the Germans were engaged in the titanic battle against the Russians, the R. A. F. conducted an incessant battle over occupied France and Germany. In fact Britain had opened an air front in the West. But strangely enough the R. A. F. did not encounter strong opposition from the Germans. This must have been due to two reasons. In the first place the *Luftwaffe* must have been shifted wholesale to the East to deal a crushing blow to the Russians or the British air-offensive must not have been so serious as to

cause considerable damage to the German war-industries. In spite of the *Luftwaffe's* active support to the land operations in the Eastern Front, the Germans failed to clip the wings of the Russian bear. The Russian Air Force played a prominent part in the campaign and along the wide front of 1500 miles the Russian airmen were active in destroying enemy communications, harassing concentration of troops and setting fire to ammunition dumps behind enemy lines. Besides, the Russian airmen were engaged in air-battles with the *Luftwaffe* with the result that the Germans failed to accomplish the destruction of Leningrad, Kely or Moscow by bombing. Often the German commanders threatened to raze Leningrad and Moscow to the ground by bombing but strangely enough their threat did not materialise. Of course, the *Luftwaffe* made serious attempts to rain bombs over the Russian cities but the Russian Air Force severely clipped the wings of the German eagles and drove them back to the bases before they could cause any damage. The failure of the *Luftwaffe* in the East clearly indicated that in the Battle of Britain the German Air-force had suffered irreparable losses with the result that it could no longer hold its superiority in the air. This explains the lack of strong opposition to the R. A. F. in the West and the German failure to rule the Russian sky.

The British air offensive in the West did not relieve the German pressure on the Russian Front. The Russians were short of tanks and planes and unless these were speedily supplied from England or America, Russians knew that they could not continue the resistance. Russia's war potentials are mainly her man power and raw materials, but a German thrust to the Ukraine will destroy Russian industries. Unless the Allies guarantee a steady stream of war supplies, especially tanks and planes, in the shortest

possible time the colosses, that is Russia, may crack and crumble under the weight of the German Mechanised Attila. There is another chief factor that can rally to the assistance of the Russians and that is the Russian morale. From what one knows of the Russians they may be trusted to maintain their morale, however grievous their losses and defeats. Even this morale can be preserved only if the immense potentialities of America and the British Commonwealth are translated immediately into guns, tanks, planes and ships and speedily despatched to the Eastern Front.

Britain could have launched an offensive in Libya and could have driven the German and Italian forces back to Tripoli. This would have opened up a second front in the East and would have greatly relieved the German pressure on the Russians. Now a golden opportunity was presented to Britain to regain her lost positions in Libya but strangely enough Britain did not take that opportunity. She was not prepared to meet the strong tank units of the Germans and Italians stationed in Libya. The British people wanted that the Government should open a second front either in Libya or in France so that Hitler would be compelled to fight on two fronts. In the absence of such a second front Hitler can have his own way in Russia. Though Russia is a very vast country it is doubtful whether she will be able to continue the war even after the loss of Ukraine and other industrial areas. The British Navy in the Mediterranean scored many successes in sinking the Italian transports.

effect on the German Industries, but that cannot relieve the tremendous pressure on the Russians. Once the Russians are accounted for, Hitler will be able to use the vast resources of Russia to make good all the losses he has suffered in the west.

The causes for Britain's not opening a second front were that she was short of materials and she was not getting as much as she wanted from America. The President of the United States could not speed up the production due to numerous strikes in almost all major industrial plants. This means Hitler's Fifth Column, through the agency of Isolationists like Colonel Lindburg, Ex President Hoover, was carrying on a war of sabotage in American industries to cripple American help reaching Britain. This inevitably forced Britain to remain inactive.

During the fourth week of the Russo-German war the Nazis claimed the capture of Smolensk. But the Russians denied the German claim and said that the city was in their hands. Anyhow it was beyond doubt that the Germans had penetrated deep into Russia. They had driven numerous wedges into the Stalin Line and had pushed back the Russians all along the front. In the Ukraine the Nazis were pushing towards Kiev and in the north their objective was Leningrad. In the face of claims and counter claims it was difficult to judge the actual position of the armies at the same time it seemed that the Nazi threat was assuming dangerous proportions. The very fact that the Nazis had reached the outskirts of Smolensk constituted a great danger to the Russian capital which was only 150 miles from Smolensk. In spite of the gallant resistance of the Russians the Germans seemed to be progressing. Before capturing the city of Smolensk the Nazis paid dearly in men and materials. The Russians halted the German offensive at

Germans could not progress beyond Smolensk, and besides, the Russians, under the command of Marshal Timoshenko, scored local victories in their counter attacks in the Smolensk sector. Marshal Timoshenko's dynamic defence, punctuated by vigorous counter-attacks, heartened the Red Army and it inflicted terrible losses on the invaders. The Germans claimed to have inflicted colossal losses on the Russians, and Dr. Goebbels went so far as to assert that the Red Army had been partially annihilated. But Goebbels's words should be taken with a pinch of salt for in many cases he makes the Nazis annihilate more armies than are really existing. Commenting on the German claim of having broken through the Stalin Line, the Soviet Information Chief pointed out that Dr. Goebbels had attempted to create a legend about the existence of a powerful, fortified Stalin Line to conceal the heavy German losses. Dr. Goebbels found the existence of the Stalin Line on the whole front and the fortifications were impregnable wherever the Nazis encountered stubborn resistance and suffered particularly heavy losses. The Russians pointed out that fortified points existed on the Russian border, but there was no Stalin Line extending over the length of nearly 2000 miles. The Russians characterised the German claims as fantastic and absurd, and said that the Stalin Line was a Nazi invention. The Russians also declared that the Soviet war prisoners included the Soviet population, men and women forcibly seized for hard labour. According to the Russian figures, the Russians lost during the six weeks of the war, 600,000 men, while the Red Army seized and destroyed

While the titanic struggle was in full swing in the East the blue waters of the Atlantic was astir with dramatic and historic events. The President of the United States and the Premier of Great Britain met somewhere in the Atlantic to decide the war and peace aims of the Allies. The meeting was kept a closely guarded secret. Mr. Winston Churchill accompanied by high military, naval and air officials sailed on board the British battleship *King George V* and met President Roosevelt on board the American cruiser *Augusta*. It seemed possible that there might have been held several conferences between the American and British officials concerning the complicated problems of fighting Hitler and Hitlerism as well as the problems of the post war world. While the actual text of the talks were kept a guarded secret, a joint declaration was made setting forth the war & peace aims of the Allies. The declaration reads (1) Their countries seek no aggrandisement, territorial or other. (2) They desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned. (3) They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live, and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them. (4) They will endeavour with due respect for their existing obligations to further the enjoyment by all states great or small victor or vanquished of access on equal terms to trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity. (5) They desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing for all improved labour standards economic advancement and social security. (6) After the final destruction of Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the

means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries and which will afford the assurance that all men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want. (7) Such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance. (8) They believe that all nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten aggression outside their frontiers, they believe pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that disarmament of such nations is essential. They will, likewise, aid and encourage all other practical measures which will lighten for peace loving peoples the crushing burden of armament.

I have given the full text of the declaration so that the reader can study all the eight points carefully and form his own opinion. On my part I believe that the declaration is vague at the same time the principles laid down are magnificent. If these principles can be acted upon in the spirit in which they are laid down, then a prosperous and free world, where all the nations will live side by side in an 'eternal brotherhood', can come into being at the end of the war. The British Dominions hailed the declaration as a "Magna Carta" but in India where hostility to and distrust of the British Government exists, the declaration could not raise spontaneous appreciation. Still however, the people of this country hoped that the Prime Minister of Great Britain would clarify the question of the application of the "Atlantic Charter" to India and the different political parties and sections in this country requested Mr Churchill to issue a statement to the effect. The Prime Minister instead of raising the hopes of the Indians shattered them.

by a categorical statement that the Atlantic Charter did not affect India at all, and that the relations between the Indian people and Britons were governed by the principle of the ruler and ruled, which was detailed in the Viceroy of India's August offer (1940)

Berlin characterised the declaration as 'old long-discarded stock from the mouth chest of the vanished Versailles dialectic, bearing the Geneva hall-work which has been hauled out and refreshed up'.

In spite of all the vagaries of the Atlantic Charter, it established the fact that the two English speaking democracies have united to destroy Hitler and Hitlerism. The Churchill Roosevelt meeting clearly pointed out to the Axis Powers that their attempt to disrupt the relations between the United States and England were futile and their abusive propaganda against Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt only served to draw these two statesmen closer and at the same time to convince the world of the meanness, indecency and naked brutality of the Nazi ideology. The Atlantic meeting was a diplomatic victory of the greatest magnitude for the Allies.

### **The Battle for Kiev & Leningrad**

The drive towards Leningrad and Kiev was of the greatest significance to the Germans. Hitler knew that he could not avoid a winter campaign in Russia and so he was determined to damage the Soviet's war industries so severely that the Red Army would be unable adequately to re-equip itself during the cold weather. Once the Russian industries are destroyed before the winter sets in, the Red Army will not be able to carry on a sustained campaign. Thus Hitler's plan was to capture Leningrad and the whole

of the Ukraine before December. The Germans had already weakened Russia's war potential when they occupied the great bend of the river Dnieper. The Russians were forced to destroy the famous Dnieper Dam to prevent the Germans from crossing the river. In the first rush towards the heart of the Ukraine the Germans had deprived the Soviet of 60% of its iron ore, 35% of its manganese and 40% of its aluminium. But across the Dnieper even greater prizes are available. There are the rich manufacturing centres of the Don and Donetsk basins; Kharkov, the heart of the industrial Ukraine; and finally the oil of the Caucasus. That was the booty Hitler wanted to lay his hands on in the Ukraine. In the north Hitler wanted Moscow and Leningrad, both important industrial cities whose loss would be a severe blow to Soviet economy. Hitler thought that if he could accomplish the capture of Moscow, Leningrad, the Ukraine including the Caucasus oil fields, Russians would be unable to continue their resistance with the assistance of Russia's remaining resources in the Urals and Siberia where Stalin has his shadow factories.

This was the grand strategy of Hitler. It seemed that the Germans would accomplish this gigantic task in spite of the dogged and fanatical resistance of the Red Army. The offensive towards Leningrad was launched regardless of losses. The German forces crept slowly towards the city, but they had to pay dearly for every inch of ground gained. The Russians counter-attacked with heavy tanks and the Soviet Air-force hampered the German advance. The *Luftwaffe* was no longer superior in the air. The Soviet air-men showed plenty of pluck and cleared the sky over the Leningrad Front of German planes. This heroic defence showed that there was plenty of kick left in the defence. Marshal Voroshilov's men were of tough calibre and it

seemed that they would hold the city for another month. The Russians in this sector were confident that they would disrupt the northern part of Hitler's grandiose plan. But they were short of planes and they expected that Britain would not fail them in their hour of need. Britain was eager to see the Russians emerge victorious in the battles, for the loss of Russia as a stubborn fighting unit would not only strengthen the Nazis, but also would greatly weaken Britain. Under the splendid leadership of Lord Beaverbrook, Britain was working to her maximum capacity and doing everything in her power to supply the Russians with fighter planes and tanks. Before the battle for Leningrad reached a climax, British planes were seen over Leningrad and the suburbs fighting the Germans. The defences of Leningrad were superior to the Maginot Line, both as regards to the number of fortifications and their adaptation of swampy terrain. The defences presented extraordinary severe obstacles to the invaders. There was complete co-operation between the forces of civil and military defences and the factories in Leningrad turned out immense war materials in spite of German bombing of the city. The workers of factories which had been rendered unworkable formed themselves into powerful fighting units to defend the city. Leningrad stood as a rock against the mighty onslaught of the Germans. The Germans threw in columns after columns of new forces to the front only to be wiped out by the gallant defenders of the city. A savage battle raged for many days in which victories and defeats were sustained by both sides. The nearer the Germans approached the city the greater the resistance they encountered. In spite of staking a large number of divisions on this particular sector, Hitler could not succeed in piercing the defence of Leningrad. In the first few days of the assault Germans suffered 700 officers and men killed in the battle field. Marshal Voroshilov

sounded a clarion call to his men asking them to defend the city to the last man. The soldiers as well as the citizens of Leningrad responded as one man and prepared themselves to lay down their lives in defending the famous city of Russia. It must be said that it was due to the fanatic patriotism and stubborn resistance of the Russians Leningrad defied the Nazi hordes.

In the Ukraine the Nazis had better chances. They pierced the defences of Kiev and surrounded the city. Marshal Budenny who had left behind a powerful force for the defence of Kiev now found that this force was in imminent danger of being annihilated.

The Germans claimed to have trapped more than 20 000 soldiers in the city of Kiev. They said that the German forces were continuing the process of annihilation of the enemy with great vigour but strangely enough the Russians were able to fight their way through the German ring and rejoin their main army. During the first two months of warfare in the Russian front the Russian soldiers were able to thwart many German plans of encirclement. More than once the Germans succeeded in encircling the Red Army but every time, to the great dismay of the German commanders and to the great admiration of the Russians as well as all the nations of the world, the valiant Russian soldiers escaped encirclement and rejoined their forces. This speaks volumes for the courage, tenacity and unshakable morale of the Russians. The battle of Leningrad and Kiev was one more demonstration to the world of the stirring qualities of the Russians as fierce and valiant fighters. Once one of the Generals of Napoleon warned him of the fanaticism of the Russians and today the Russians have shown that they are not mere fanatics but fanatic patriots and when it is a question of defending their soil they will never yield nor

lay down their arms unless and until every German is driven out of the Russian soil. If this spirit lives,—and we hope it will live—Russia will survive, not only survive but will hurl the Germans back, not only will hurl them back but will pursue them to the depth of Germany, not only will pursue them as they retreat but will annihilate them and destroy the grand German military machine before it reaches its home

But the stark fact that the Russians had retreated far behind the river Dnieper and that the combined forces of Rumanians and Germans had stormed the Black Sea port of Odessa, remains. Odessa was well defended but it was doubtful whether the defenders could hold on incessantly in the absence of reinforcement and supply of a powerful airforce. The Germans launched an offensive on the whole southern front, from Kiev to the Black Sea. They crossed the Dnieper and advanced towards Kharkov and developed an offensive towards Crimea. It was obvious that the Germans intended to storm Crimea by land, sea and air. In short, Hitler has gambled once again and only future events will show whether he will be able to succeed and reach his objectives in the teeth of tremendous opposition from the Russians.

In the central sector there was not much change. The battle continued round Smolensk. Marshal Timoshenko launched local counter attacks with some good results though not spectacular. In the extreme north the Finns were making some progress and were trying to attack Leningrad from the north. Thus at the end of the second year of the war Russia was engaged in a life and death struggle with the Nazis who were their 'eternal friends' just a couple of years ago. At the end of two years of war the Germans had conquered the whole of Europe with the exception of Russia.

In Russia they had made great inroads. More than half of European Russia had fallen to the Nazis and the great Don and Donetsk basins were threatened. The loss of Kiev was the severest blow the Russians had sustained so far. The loss of Kiev was unfortunate as it was a bastion protecting Northern Ukraine. The retreating Russians demolished everything of value before they withdrew, at the same time the coal and wheat of the Ukraine were lost to them. Stalin proclaimed his decision to enrol the whole manhood of the country for military service and thus demonstrated his determination to continue the war to a final conclusion. The Germans claimed that they had advanced far beyond Kiev and had captured Poltava, some 200 miles north of Kiev. In fine at the close of the second year of the war the Russians were bearing the brunt of the German onslaught, practically single handed. They were fighting for protecting their Fatherland, and more than that, a new system of life which they had built up after years of strenuous struggle. The gallant resistance of the Russians will go down in history as the fiercest and terrible battle fought against the mightiest and deadliest military force of the world in the cause of Freedom.

### Climax of the Russian campaign

While the war was raging fiercely on the whole front, an important conference met at Moscow. Though the Nazis were storming the Soviet lines just a hundred miles away from Moscow, the capital was calm and the people went about their work as if nothing serious or unusual was happening. Every man and woman of the Soviet Union were aware of the dangers that threatened their country, but they were confident that they would be able to drive the Nazis out of their sacred soil. They went about their work carrying their lives in their hands and with a calmness of

mind that was characteristic of the people who knew what they were up against and what the final outcome of the great battle in which their countrymen were fighting with unprecedented gallantry, would be. The Three Power Conference met in a tranquil atmosphere. The representatives of Great Britain, The United States of America and the Soviet Union met to discuss ways and means of saving the world from Fascist and Nazi aggression. Though America was not at war with Germany and Italy she was ready to give all assistance to the countries fighting to save the democratic way of life from being trampled by the ruthless militarists of Nazidom. This conference reminded the Axis Powers that America was determined to see that Russia got all the material assistance she could give and also reminded the subjugated countries of Europe that America was very keen on liberating the people of Europe from Hitlerism and set them free from the aggressive forces which had brutally enslaved them. Germany and Italy were nervous about the turn things were taking. They knew the potential strength of America and realised that, if America would throw her full weight on the side of the Allies they could not get victory and hence they made every effort to ridicule the importance of the Three Power Conference. Dr Goebbels set his machinery going and told the world that America would do nothing more than talk and that before American help could reach Russia that country would be under the German heel and the Red Army would cease to exist. In spite of Dr Goebbels's propaganda the conference was a success. Stalin took an active part in the discussions and the Russians were electrified when they knew that the people of the United States were determined to send them all the assistance they could to help them drive the Germans out of the Russian soil. The Russians redoubled their efforts to stem the Nazi advance while the Nazis made an all out effort to

bring the war to a successful conclusion before the beginning of winter.

Speaking at the Conference M. Molotov said, 'The co-ordination of such great Powers as the United States, Britain and the Soviet is a decisive factor guaranteeing the final success in the struggle, despite the temporary Hitlerite successes on this or that sector of the front. The conference has shown that the supply of aeroplanes, tanks, and other weapons of armaments and raw materials will be further extended and gain in importance. Here the hopes of Hitlerite robber bands are frustrated. Hitler, contrary to his intentions, has only succeeded in speeding the unification of efforts of the greatest democratic nations against tyranny——. However, many efforts the Hitlerites may make to rob, beginning with a second year of oppression in France and ending with Bulgaria, now transformed by the will of the Bulgarian leaders into a base for new Hitlerite adventures against the Soviet, all this will not give the Hitlerite annexationists enough resources to continue the war. Our conference will go down in history in connection with the glorious destruction of Hitler, the enslaver of peoples. It is not sufficient to hate these Goerings Hitlers and Ribbentrops, but it is necessary to finish for ever this criminal band of enslavers and annexationists at the head of which stands the curse of mankind.' M. Molotov concluded by saying, 'I assure the British and the American representatives that our will in the struggle is unbending, and that our conviction of victory over the enemy of all freedom-loving countries is unshakable.'

The reaction to the Three-Power Conference in Germany was one of frenzy. The Axis propagandists did nothing but abuse the leaders and people of the democratic countries. But on the battle-front the Germans used their utmost

resources and strength in an effort to smash the Red Army and then to subdue the Soviet Union, before the results of the conference could take a menacing shape.

Another important event that happened just a little away from the battle front was the entry of the Russian and the British troops into Iran. For some time past Germans had been pouring into Iran under one pretext or the other and were working in collaboration with Rashid Ali of Iraq, who had fled to Iran after the failure of his revolt in his own country, trying to foment trouble. The British and the Russian authorities, being anxious to prevent a revolt in Iran, decided to occupy that country. Iran was in a very strategic position as it could be used as a "Back-door" to the Caucasus oil fields. The reluctance of Reza Shah Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran to eject the Nazis from his country made the Allies believe that the Shah of Iran must be hand and glove with the Nazis to foment trouble behind the British lines in the Middle East. The British and the Soviet authorities made it clear to the people of Iran that they did not in the least wish to occupy their country and bring it under their domination, but they were determined to prevent Nazi machinations which if they would allow to develop would certainly disrupt their lines of defence. With the memory of the Iraq-revolt fresh in their minds they were not willing to leave any thing to chance, on the other hand they were resolved to nip the Nazi plot in the bud. The Iranian forces under the instigation of the Nazi agents put up some resistance to the Soviet and the British forces, that advanced into Iran, but their opposition was short-lived. The British and the Soviet forces advanced cautiously taking care to inflict as little injury as possible on the Indian troops; all the same they concentrated their energies to round up all Nazi agents. The Iranian trouble ended with

the expulsion of Reza Shah. The Shah abdicated in favour of his son, but it was not a voluntary abdication. He was compelled to leave the country for fear that his complicity in the Nazi plot would come to light if he continued to be at the Head of the State. It was clear that he had been the dictator of Iran and that he had sympathised with the Axis Powers and as such his presence in the country any longer would be certainly against the interest of his own people. Besides, the British and Soviet Governments would not permit him to be the Head of the State after his open rebellion. The prompt settling of the Iran-trouble was of the greatest value to the Soviet, especially at a time when the Nazis were advancing menacingly towards the Caucasus. The military occupation of Iran and the capture of all the Nazi Agents in that country—there were hundreds of Germans in Iran—eliminated the possibility of a German drive to the Caucasus from Iran.

With the approach of winter Hitler decided to launch a mass offensive along the whole front. In his speech in Berlin he said a great new offensive designed to settle the issue in Russia was in progress, and secretly gave orders to the commanders of the Battalions to push forward. This latest offensive was of enormous strength and vigour and drove the Russians back considerably. For over a month Marshal Timoshenko was counter-attacking the Germans in the central sector. Though the counter-attacks had nothing more than local importance, they worried the Germans besieging Leningrad as well as threatened the heterogeneous forces under the command of von Rundstedt pushing into the Ukraine. Hitler's plan was to capture Leningrad and Kharkov so that he could encircle Marshal Timoshenko's forces in the central sector. The stubborn resistance of the Russian forces in the north as well as in the south thwarted Hitler's

plan and besides time pressed hard. Hence Hitler was compelled to strike at the forces of Timoshenko with the object of relieving the threat to his forces in the Ukraine as well as in the Leningrad front. The main blow of this latest offensive was directed in the central sector. The Soviet troops withdrew after taking a heavy toll of the enemy for every inch of ground yielded. While the Germans were advancing towards Viasma, Bryansk and Orsk in the central sector, the heterogeneous forces of von Rundstedt were heading towards Kharkov, Dnepropetrovsk, Melitopol and Mariupol in the Ukraine. Odessa was still holding out. The main German forces, leaving the Rumanians to storm Odessa, advanced towards the coast of the Sea of Azov. Russians offered stout resistance but could not stem the mighty German advance, though they were able to slow down the Nazi thrust. After two weeks of fighting the Russians found their positions in the Ukraine very serious, they also realised the gravity of the situation in the central sector. They knew that a herculean effort was required to stem the Nazi thrust to the capital and the fall of their capital would be the greatest blow to the security of the Soviet Union. Referring to the gravity of the latest German drive the *Pravda* wrote "Cannibal Hitler is throwing against us all his reserves, almost all his land troops enormous quantities of tanks and almost all his air force. The Germans have brought to the Soviet front the greater part of their troops from the occupied countries and have replaced them by old men and invalids. The Germans have gathered enormous quantities of armaments. Apart from the German factories proper, the Hitlerite bands are supplied by the war industries of the occupied countries of Czechoslovakia, France and Belgium, including all the great factories like Skoda, Renault, Hotchkiss and others. Now the Germans have hurled

in the Briansk and Vyasma directions considerable forces of their air force, armoured tank troops and infantry. Having hurled into the battle their reserves, having used Italians, Hungarians and Finnish troops, the Germans have scored numerical superiority in a number of sectors and have driven a wedge into the positions of our forces in some places. The enemy has suffered enormous losses, but it would be unpardonable flippancy to underestimate the gravity of the situation."

The Russians followed their oft repeated tactics of allowing the German tank units to pierce their lines and advance a little into the interior and then surrounding them and destroying them. These tactics were highly successful in inflicting severe losses to the mechanized units of the enemy; also it enabled the Russians to separate the German infantry from the tank units and thus to cut off co-ordination among the fighting units of the enemy. This method of warfare definitely slowed down the German advance, still however, the Germans advanced. After a couple of weeks of fierce and embittered fighting the Germans had reached the gates of the Russian capital—Moscow. The city lay only 50 miles away from the enemy. It was the ruthless concern of the Russians, men and women, to fight to the last before leaving the capital. They were resolved not to allow the Germans to set foot on the capital so long as a single individual was alive to fight. Realising the gravity of the threat to Moscow, Stalin declared that Moscow was in a state of siege and also announced that the capital had been shifted to Kuibyshev. This did not in the least mean that the Russians were preparing to evacuate the capital. On the other hand they were bringing out reinforcements to the Moscow front to stem the German advance to the capital. The Germans were developing an encircling movement in the Moscow front,

while they were launching a fierce attack in the south. In the northern sector the Germans could not accomplish much success and Leningrad held out in spite of tremendous German pressure. The soldiers of Leningrad were aware of the grave situation prevailing at the Moscow front and knew that if Moscow would fall to the Germans they would be completely cut off from the capital and would be encircled. But Marshal Voroshilov's men knew that the defenders of Moscow would push the Germans back and would not let the capital fall to the Nazis.

The German drive in the Ukraine assumed very serious proportions. The Germans had captured the industrial capital of the Ukraine, Kharkov and along the coast of the Sea of Azov, they had reached Taganrog some 35 miles from the key city of Rostov at the mouth of the river Don, the gateway to the Caucasus through which ran the pipe line and important railway communications. It was essential that the Russians should make every effort to prevent Rostov falling into German hands. Simultaneously with the drive in the Ukraine the Germans were pushing towards the Perekop isthmus at the entrance to the Crimea. Odessa, after a month of stubborn resistance had fallen and was occupied by the Rumanians. These days were the most trying times for the Russians and if the Germans succeeded in reaching Moscow and Rostov then the oils of the Caucasus would be within their reach and if the Germans got the oil they would certainly win the war against Russia and it would be very difficult for the Russians to regain their lost territory.

The battle against Russia had reached a climax. The Germans had been giving out to the world that the battle in Russia was nearing its end and the next few days would

decide the fate of the Russians. The world was expectant and relied upon Stalin and his associates to turn the tide of the battle.

### The Battle for Moscow and Crimea

In the first week of November the battle for Moscow assumed dangerous proportions. The Germans kept up ceaseless pressure on the Moscow front sustaining heavy casualties, but thrusting forward despite the bad weather and the ferocious resistance of the Soviet Army. It must be remembered here that the winter was fast approaching and snow had already begun to fall. The Germans were making a final effort to capture the key cities of the Soviet Union before the severity of the Russian winter would compel them to call a halt in their *blitzkrieg* in Russia. The Nazis were following their well known policy of seeking a weak spot in the Russian line. When they were pushed back in the Kalinin front they switched over to the southern end of the offensive and developed a menacing push in the region of the manufacturing city of Tula. The Nazis were trying to get behind the capital from the south east. In the centre they pressed stubbornly along the direct road to Moscow and made some progress at Volokolamsk, north-west of Moscow. The Germans were only 40 miles from the gates of the Russian capital and they boasted that the Red Army had been completely annihilated and that their forces were about to enter the Soviet capital. These propaganda broadcasts were intended to hide from the German people at home the tremendous losses the Nazi forces were suffering at the front and also to impress the subject nations of Europe that the Russians had no other alternative but to surrender to the might of Germany. Undoubtedly rain and snow were hampering operations, upsetting Hitler's timetable while the tenacity and determination of the Soviet

people to destroy Hitler and Hitlerism assumed the form of a fanatic patriotism. The Russian forces, in spite of the terrible losses they had sustained, retained a high morale and the Soviet strategy changed from defensive to offensive. The Soviet forces launched counter-attacks everywhere and slowed down the German advance.

In the face of all these reverses one inspiring fact stood out. The Russian armies had not disintegrated; though they were being pushed back, they were retiring as a cohesive force and were making the enemy pay dearly for every inch of ground. By keeping the cohesion of the fighting forces the Russians had completely defeated the attempts of the Nazis to annihilate the Red Army. This strategy was of the greatest importance in the defence of the wide front. If Hitler had succeeded in splitting the Red forces into small fighting units scattered over the 1500 miles front, then the Russians would have been conquered earlier than the German commanders thought possible. But the valour of the Russian soldiers and the far-reaching policy of the Russian generals and leaders enabled the Russian people to put up a stubborn resistance to the invaders. When history comes to be written about this Second World War, the part played by the Russians in defending the principles of freedom and democracy against the forces of aggression will be immortalised. The valiant Russian soldiers who have sacrificed their lives in defence of freedom will occupy the place of honour in the history of mankind and the spirit that animated the Russians to protect their native soil from the wanton aggression of cruel militarists will live for ages and through the pages of history will animate the future generation of mankind to hold the ideals of freedom as the highest divine gift for the attainment of which no sacrifice is too great.

While the Russian forces were battering at the Nazis on fronts, plants and workmen from war factories in Leningrad, Moscow and the Ukraine were transferred to Urals and those new industrial regions the Soviet had built up in eastern Siberia. The stupendous service rendered by the guerrillas can never be belittled. Guerilla warfare had been one of the special features of the Russian front. Soviet guerrillas had been inflicting serious losses on the enemy, disrupting his communications, causing casualties and destroying tanks, lorries, and ammunitions. The activities of the guerrillas had been so great a menace behind the German lines that the Fascists were compelled to divert strong forces for the protection of their rear. During the last ten months of battle on the Russian front the Russian guerrillas have achieved victories after victories behind the German lines and these victories have been of the greatest assistance to the main Soviet Army fighting the Germans in the front.

The reverses sustained by the Soviet Army, serious and grave as they were, did not in the least shake the confidence of the Russian people in the final outcome of the battle. M. Stalin, addressing a session of the Moscow Soviet to commemorate the twenty-fourth anniversary of the October Revolution, said; "Twenty-four years have passed since the Socialist Revolution established Soviet order in our land. The period of peaceful construction has ended. Now comes the time of struggle against the German annexationists. Our task is to assert all our efforts in the war of liberation. The German Fascists are robbing our country. They are destroying our towns and villages. Savage Fascist hordes are slaughtering the peaceful inhabitants of our country. This is German civilisation.

*"Our army is performing miracles of heroism, but the enemy does not stop. The counter-attacks of our armies are*

"The Germans relied on the unsoundness of the Soviet constitution and the unsoundness of the Soviet rear, thinking that after a serious blow on the Red Army a conflict would arise between the peasants and the workers; that fighting would start between the nations comprising the Soviet State and there would be risings and the country would disintegrate, all of which would facilitate a German advance right to the Urals but the Germans again miscalculated. The misfortunes of the Red Army far from weakening the alliance of workers and peasants only served to strengthen it. It is quite probable that any other state bearing such losses as has the Soviet would have failed to withstand the ordeal and would have fallen. If the Soviet organisation has withstood such tragedy that has occurred and has further strengthened its home front, this means that the Soviet organisation is the strongest.

"Apart from this, there are other considerations which produce temporary setbacks for the Red Army, which has been forced to retreat and give up tracts of our country to the enemy. What are these considerations? What is the reason for this military misfortune of the Red Army? One reason is that there is no second front in Europe against Germany. At present, on the Continent of Europe, there are no armies in existence belonging to Great Britain or the United States to fight against the Fascists, therefore the Germans are not compelled to divide their forces and carry on the war on two fronts in the west and the east. This means that the Germans considering their front in the west to be safe, are able to pit all their forces and their allies in Europe against our army. Doubtless the absence of a second front in Europe very much lightens the position of the German armies, but there can be no doubt that the appearance of a second front on the European Continent—

and it must certainly appear in the immediate future—  
will very considerably lighten our position

‘The other cause of the temporary misfortunes of our army is to be found in our shortage of tanks and aircraft. In a modern war it is very difficult to fight with infantry without tanks and sufficient air-support. There is only one means of reducing to nothing the German superiority in tanks and in this way radically to imperil the position of her army. This means consists of not only increasing severa times the output of tanks in our country but also in sharply increasing the output of anti-tank aircraft, anti-tank rifles and guns and anti tank-grenades. This is our task now. We can fulfil this task and we must fulfil it at any cost.’

M. Stalin concluded by ridiculing the idea that Hitler's party was a National Socialist Party and said that the Germans who compared Hitler to Napoleon should remember that Hitler was no more like Napoleon than a cat resembled a lion. He ended his speech by saying, “We may say with certainty that the coalition of the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union is a real thing which is growing and will continue to grow to the benefit of our common cause—liberation. These are the factors determining the inevitable destruction of Nazism and Imperialism. All honest people must support the arm of our country, of Great Britain and the United States as champion of liberation not only in Europe but, in Asia for instance. The subjugated peoples of the world came to us for help. We must do all in our power to help them live a life of complete liberty in their homeland as they want to. To do that we must break the life of the German war machine.”

I have quoted Stalin at great length because his speech is of the greatest significance. While praising the heroism of his troops, he admitted the shortage of essential war materials. That meant that British and American supplies were not available to the Russians in sufficient quantities; he also complained that Russia was compelled to fight against the armed forces of all the European countries and that neither Britain nor America did anything to relieve the German pressure on the eastern front by opening another front in the west. This seemed to say that Britain's bombing of the German industries in the Rhineland, the Ruhr and the occupied countries was not of any serious consequence to Germany.

The most dangerous threat was in Crimea. The Germans had already entered the peninsula and had occupied the capital. The Russians resisted stubbornly but they could not stem the German advance. The Germans threw into the Battle for Crimea new tank divisions and drove the Russians to Sebastopole. This was the most important port of Crimea from where the Russian Black-sea fleet could operate. Despite terrible fighting the Germans failed to capture Sebastopole but the rest of the Crimea was in German hands. The occupation of the Kerch peninsula by the Germans presented a serious threat to the Caucasus oil-fields, and if the Germans would occupy Rostov, then the Russian oil would be available to the Nazis. It seemed that the Russians had almost lost the battle, the Germans had to make one more supreme effort and then the battle for Moscow and Crimea would have been won. With the coming of winter, operations did not progress according to Hitler's plan and besides the Russians developed their offensive. The Russians were well prepared for a winter campaign and they were

fighting from their own soil. They were also nearer to their supply bases. The Germans were far away from their supply bases and were constantly harassed by the Russian guerillas in their rear. To add to this they were not prepared to face a winter campaign. The German forces were exposed to the severe winter conditions and this hampered their advance.

The Russian offensive developed along the whole front. In the Ukraine, Timoshenko drove the Germans from the approaches to Rostov, in the central sector the defenders of Moscow inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and forced him to withdraw from the outer defences of the capital. Though the Germans almost encircled Leningrad, they could not capture the city. Thus the beginning of winter found the Germans at the gates of Moscow. They looked on at the city, but could not enter it. They were thrown outside in the open field to suffer the severities of the Russian winter, while a few miles ahead of them lay the capital of Russia which gave adequate shelter for the Russians. Again there was the fear of the Russians counter-attacking and ousting the Nazi from the villages and towns they had already captured. With such gloomy prospects before them the Germans must have been greatly disappointed at their failure to capture Moscow and this failure must have affected the moral of the German soldiers to a great extent. Thus after two years of victorious battles the Germans were facing definite defeat. For the first time during this war the Allies were beginning to turn the tide of battle in their favour, but, it was left to Russia to begin the battle for victory for the Allied cause.

### Japan on the war path

Since the beginning of the Sino Japanese war the relations between America and Japan had deteriorated and

In November, 1941 a crisis developed. With the success of the German *blitzkrieg* in Russia, Japan had been goaded by Germany to start trouble in the Far East. Japan knew that it would not be very easy to smash the combined forces of America and Great Britain, still, however, she was tempted to gamble. With the coming of General Tojo in power, Japan clearly embarked on an aggressive foreign policy, though she pretended that she was anxious to settle the "China-Affair" as well as the European and American interests in the Far East in the peaceful manner. In reality Japan contemplated nothing short of establishing a big Empire in the Far East, embracing India, China, Neatherland East-Indies. She found that Great Britain and America blocked her way to the establishment of her Empire in Asia, and hence determined to wage a war to gain her objects. She was waiting for an opportune moment to strike.

General Tojo began his administration by accusing America of hindering the settlement of "China Affair," at the same time he asserted that his Government was determined to achieve the establishment of Japan's "New Order" in Asia at any cost. On the other hand America and Britain had warned Japan that they would stand united with Australia, Neatherland East Indies and other Far Eastern countries to fight Japan if she would precipitate a war in the Pacific. Mr. Churchill knew well that Japan was inspired by the Axis to start trouble in the Pacific and that, in spite of the great efforts made by America to maintain the status quo in the Far East, trouble was brewing in that part of the world. Therefore he warned Japan in the following words: "I must admit that, having fought for a Japanese alliance nearly 40 years ago in 1902, and having always done my very best to promote good relations with the island

empire of Japan and an admirer of their many gifts and qualities, I would view with keen horror the opening of a conflict between Japan and the English-speaking world. The United States' interest in the Far East is well-known. They are doing their utmost to find a way to preserve peace in the Pacific. We do not know whether their efforts will be successful. But if they fail, I take this occasion to say—and it is my duty to say—should the United States become involved in a war with Japan, the British declaration will follow within an hour”.

The United States was rapidly preparing for all eventualities. The United States scrapped the Neutrality Act, thereby facilitating the arming of merchantmen and sending them to combat zones. As a reply to this the Axis Powers began sinking American ships. Thus America was virtually at war, though no declaration was made by either side. America was determined to defend her freedom in all corners of the globe. President Roosevelt said, “The people of America believe that liberty is worth fighting for. And if they are obliged to fight they will fight eternally to hold it. This duty we owe not to ourselves alone but to the many dead who died to gain our freedom for us—and to make the world a place where freedom can live and grow into the ages.”

Mr. Togo, the Japanese Foreign Minister said, “Britain and the United States have gone to the length of establishing encircling positions against Japan by inducing Australia, the Dutch East Indies and Chungking to join them. The pressure of Britain and the United States affects the very existence of the Empire. If an occasion should arise which might menace the existence of our Empire or compromise our prestige as a great Power, the entire nation must unite to overcome such a situation.”

As things stood there was no sign of any peace in the Far East. Yet, as a last effort Japan sent Mr. Kurusu, the special Japanese emissary, to America to bring about peace between the two countries. Mr. Kurusu's mission broke down and a war in the Far East was imminent. All the countries concerned were feverishly preparing for the coming hostilities. Japan had decided to gamble and was waiting for a favourable moment to cast her dice.

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# HITLER'S WAR

Vol. III.

BY

*H. R. Aiyer*

C. S. Raja & Co.

Srivaraham Street

TRIVANDRUM

Price Re. 1/8.

Second Impression.....1945

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Printed at the A. R. V. Press, Trivandrum  
and Published by C. S. Raja & Co Srivaraham Street,  
Trivandrum.

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This is the third volume of the chronicle of the Second World War. It traces the course of the War from the winter of 1941 up to the invasion of Sicily by the Allied forces. The campaigns in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia are vividly described and the political aspects of the North African campaign are discussed. The epic defence of Stalingrad is lucidly narrated and interesting sidelights of the War are included.

# CONTENTS

Hitler's War (Part V)				Page
Winter 1941	...	...	...	1
"Cunningham Circus"	...	...	...	4
Soylet Offensive Starts	...	...	...	10
Blows and Counter Blows	...	...	...	13
Voluntary Retreat in Russia	...	...	...	22
Second Blitz in Russia	...	...	...	28
Stalingrad Makes History	...	...	...	33
Hitler's War (Part VI)				
Africa Regained	...	...	...	41
Tunisia Falls	...	...	...	59
First Step to Second Front	...	...	...	64
Russian recovery	...	...	...	65
Side Lights	...	...	...	68

# HITLER'S WAR

(PART V)

WINTER 1941

The situation at the Russian Front was very grave at the approach of winter. In spite of the Allied propaganda setting forth insurmountable difficulties for the Germans in the occupied countries and the transport difficulties that the Nazis were called upon to face due to their rapid advance into Russian territory, the German military achievements were prodigious. It had fallen so far short of what was originally planned, that the Germans were unable to reach their terminal objectives before the winter. This gave the Russians some time to reorganise and to recuperate and enabled the Imperial Forces to consolidate their defensive and offensive positions in the Near and Middle East. It appeared that the Germans were planning to reach the Volga and the Caucasian oil fields before the winter would set in, but due to the heroic Russian defence this plan was thwarted. Though the Germans could not reach their objective as per schedule their gains in the Russian front greatly threatened the Russian industrial centres. In the central front, the Germans were only 30 miles from Moscow. There can be little doubt that Hitler hoped and probably believed that the offensive would place him in possession of Moscow even if it did not achieve the total destruction of Timoshenko's Army. For a time the situation was desperately critical, but Russian resistance, aided certainly by appalling weather,

brought the Germans to a standstill at the gates of the Russian capital. Casualties in the Russian Army were certainly very heavy, but on the whole the German offensive proved a failure. Notably there had been a failure to isolate Moscow by thrusts in the Kalinin region in the north and Orsk and Tula in the south.

There had been desperate fighting in terrible conditions of cold and mud which reduced German infantry to an advanced state of exhaustion and caused rapid deterioration of mechanical vehicles. Nevertheless the German offensive achieved the immobilization of the Russian central army and reserves. This relieved von Rundstedt of anxiety for his left flank and enabled him to renew his drive in the Donetz Basin with confidence. Budyonov's Army, exhausted and weakened by losses of men and material in its long retreat, and having expended reserves in the disastrous attempt to relieve pressure on the Crimea, was in no condition to meet attack. There were undoubted signs of disorganization and perhaps in some places of will to resist. The situation became more critical than it had ever been at Moscow, and it seemed possible that the line of Donetz and Don would be crossed before the front could be restored. It was hard to set a limit to the success the German drive might achieve, but weather again seemed to have come to the assistance of the Russians. In the Rostov sector the Russians held the Nazi drive firmly. Considering the gravity of the situation in the south, Stalin decided to reorganise the command of his armies. Budyonov, though evidently a capable general, had not shown the same capacity in defensive and delaying operations as had Timoshenko. Therefore, Stalin placed Timoshenko in charge of the,

southern front. This change had a marvellous effect. The Russian front in the south was quickly reorganised and the Germans who had already penetrated the outer defences of the city of Rostov were driven back and the city was saved. With the Russian counter attack in the southern sector there was a general improvement and in spite of heavy fighting in many localities the German advance had practically come to a standstill from Leningrad to the Black Sea.

The German strategy in Crimea was aimed at denying the use of Sebastopol to the Russian Black Sea Fleet. For this it was necessary to capture the fortress since long range artillery fire and close air attack would make the naval base untenable. In this attempt the Nazis could not get much success. Though they occupied a great part of Crimea and bombed Sebastopol incessantly the Russians did not yield. They held the port and the Russian Black Sea Fleet was active. The Nazi attack on Kerch at the entrance of the Sea of Azov was a success and it was feared that the Germans would use Kerch as a jumping off ground to invade northern Caucasus. The only thing that prevented the Germans from reaching the Caucasus was the stubborn resistance of the Russians in the Rostov sector and the might of the Russian Black Sea Fleet which from its base at Sebastopol constituted a great menace to all the German attempts to launch an invasion of northern Caucasus. But by capturing the Kerch Peninsula the Nazis were in a position to destroy all aerodromes in Crimea. If winter had not intervened the Germans would have attempted an invasion of the northern Caucasus and perhaps would have captured the oil fields. Thus at the approach of winter

warfare. The Axis forces had built a miniature Siegfried Line extending over twenty miles from Sollum to Sidr Omar and this line was held by German *Panzer* divisions led by General Rommel, Germany's tank warfare expert No 1. Originally these two divisions comprised of 800 tanks, but their number must have been reduced by war casualties during their drive into Libya pushing back the Eighth Army.

These divisions were supported by other Italian divisions. General Auchinleck knew that he was facing a mighty Axis force, however he had great confidence in his newly equipped forces and he was out to destroy the enemy's tank divisions, which were mainly responsible for the earlier reverses of the Allied troops in Libya. The battle was led by the "Cunningham Circus", Lt. General Sir Alan Cunningham in command of the land troops, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, brother of Sir Alan, in charge of Mediterranean fleet, and Sir Vice-Marshal Coningham directing the combined air squadrons of Great Britain Australia and South Africa. The 'trio' formed an excellent combination of brilliant leadership and they carried the battle into the enemy's lines with tremendous success. The British air-force pounded the enemy positions before the launching of the attack, while the Mediterranean fleet hampered Axis supplies from Italy reaching Libya. In spite of the sinking of many ships, the Nazis were able to reinforce their troops in the Western Desert; but they did not feel themselves sufficiently strong to launch an attack on Egypt. While the Allied air-force was busy destroying concentration of troops and munition dumps behind the enemy lines, the Eighth Army under cover of night on 17th November started its march in

an attempt to encircle the enemy's tank divisions. The main strategy of the Allied offensive was the destruction of enemy troops and not the occupation of a particular territory. Leaving behind a strong unit to carry on a frontal attack against the miniature Siegfried line, the main army moved southward rounding Sidi Omar in order to get behind the enemy's fortifications. Early morning on the 18th November the Allied forces contacted the enemy on their march but the Nazis were not in strength to give battle. It seemed that they were greatly surprised at the great converging movement rapidly developed by the Allied forces, for they did not wait to give a tough battle. Within forty eight hours of the commencement of the offensive the British troops had reached Sidi Rezegh, 10 miles south of Tobruk, captured Gambut and Capuzzo thus enveloping Rommel's tank divisions in the triangle formed by these three key points.

One significant fact that surprised even the British forces was the absence of the *Luftwaffe* to combat the Allied aircrafts. Due to the heavy rains that started with the commencement of the offensive the Axis aircrafts were planned to the ground, thus giving the R A F opportunity to destroy the Axis planes before they took off. This initial success did not mean that the Nazis were defeated. It simply gave the Allies some advantage over the enemy in the coming 'clash of steel'. The encirclement of the Axis tank divisions put Rommel into a tight corner. He was compelled to fight out of the triangle or perish. He could not avail himself of reinforcement without it being hampered or destroyed on the way by the Allied forces. Again the defenders of Tobruk were attempting to sally forth to join the Eighth.

Army Rommel knew that he was 'caught napping and realised that he was meeting an enemy on equal terms if not greatly superior. He was prepared for the grim battle that was ahead and moved his tanks to meet the Allied forces barring his way.

The opening of the Allied 'offensive in Libya was hailed as a Second Front by the peoples of Britain and other democracies. There was some satisfaction in Russia also, for Rommel's difficulties in Libya compelled Hitler to transfer a strong force of the *Luftwaffe* from the Russian front. Though it did not give great relief to the Russians it stiffened their *morale* in as much as it undermined the *morale* of the Nazis. Hitler was on the whole disappointed at the turn of events. The severity of winter was beginning to be felt by the Nazis at the front, the Russian resistance had become doubly stubborn and they had driven back the Nazis from Rostov after three days of bitter fighting and Romel was being pressed back by the Eighth Army. It was expected that Hitler would find some scapegoat to explain the reverses his forces were suffering on all fronts.

It is very difficult to describe the confused series of fighting that took place during the first fortnight of the offensive. The general line of action indicated by the fighting was that General Cunningham after encircling the enemy launched an attack on the aerodrome at Sidi Rezegh before its bewildered garrison realised what was happening. Simultaneously a column from Tobruk sallied forth to fill the gap and join the main army at Sidi Rezegh. Along the coast the British troops captured Bardia and Gambut. The Mediterranean fleet was shelling enemy positions along the coast and hampering

fresh Axis supplies reaching Libya. The R. A. F. had the mastery of the air from the outset and was pounding the encircled *panzer* corps and bombing supply bases as far as Benghazi. In the tank battle that followed at Sidi Rezegh the aerodrome changed hands many times and finally was captured by the Imperial forces. The column that sallied forth from Tobruk had to encounter stubborn resistance from the Axis forces. The battle was fierce and resulted in losses on both sides. But the tenacity of the small column overcame enemy resistance and finally it joined the Eighth Army at Sidi Rezegh. This link completely closed all routes for either the Axis reinforcements to reach Rommel or for Rommel to get out of the triangle. As was expected Rommel did not launch a large scale tank battle to effect a breakthrough. He was attacking the Eighth Army at points here and there to break and destroy the mechanized units. He was not prepared for an all out battle, but was feeling for the weak points to make a way. It was hard pounding on both the sides, but the issue was to be decided by the side that could pound longer. The Allied position was definitely stronger. The Commonwealth forces had great reserves in tanks and infantry and were supported by the R. A. F. which ruled the sky. Again the link up of the column from Tobruk with the main army facilitated the rapid supply of equipments through Tobruk. Above all these General Auchinleck's strategy in spreading a strong steel net round the *Panzer Korps* caught General Rommel and his men in a trap. After a clash of steel for five days General Rommel found no way to break through. This meant that Rommel was facing definite destruction at the hands of the Eighth Army, but Rommel

could not be expected to surrender. The Nazis were determined to fight to the death, but in the first phase of the battle they were kept within the steel net by the Eighth Army.

For the second time in this war the Allies had succeeded in winning the Battle of Libya. First it was the Italian Army under the command of Marshal Graziani, the famous Italian. Now also a little known Italian General existed. In theory it was the Italian General who was in charge of the operations in Libya, but in practice it was General Rommel who conducted the operations.

A wave of optimism swept over England and the less thinking man in the street jumped to the conclusion that the Allies had won the battle in Libya. The lull that followed the five days' fierce fighting between the mechanized units suggested that both sides were regrouping their forces to meet again in a fiercer battle that would decide the fate of the *Panzer Korps*.

Meanwhile the Allied forces fighting in Abyssinia had done their last job. For a long time Gondar, the last Italian stronghold in Abyssinia was holding firm. The Axis garrison at Gondar consisted of 10 000 Italian and colonial troops under General Vasi. This strong garrison was holding a mountainous country and when the rains started the Allied forces were unable to conduct any operation against it. So it was blockaded during the rainy season and no sooner did the sky brighten up than a successful attack was launched against it. The rains and the blockade nearly destroyed the morale of the troops defending the mountains and

at the first assault the garrison surrendered. Now Abyssinia was rid of the last Italian soldier and even the remotest possibility of a revival of Italian domination of Abyssinia was shattered. Mussolini had lost every yard of his African Empire and perhaps might have felt humiliated at the reverses suffered by his troops in Africa and must have cursed Hitler for not running to Abyssinia to prop up the Fascist Empire. The Socialist who made Italy join the war on the side of the Allies in 1914-18 certainly must have laughed in his sleeve at the Fascist who plunged his country into this war on the side of Germany.

Mussolini was chiefly responsible for leading the Italians into war twice within a quarter of a century, but strangely enough in 1940 he told his people to fight his Allies of 1914, stranger still, with or without Mussolini, the Italians have proved to be nothing more than a drag on the side they joined. As I had observed in the *Biography of Mussolini*, this great little man has decreed the doom of the Italian people by dragging them against their will into this war. It may be asked whether Italy could have remained neutral. If she had remained neutral, as Sweden and Spain are today, she could have saved the slaughter of her people or at least could have saved her "face" as the Japanese would put it. Today despite the enormous loss she had suffered in men and materials she stands humiliated and her great leader the father of Fascism, plays second fiddle to his disciple Adolf Hitler the dictator of all European Bolshevism.

## SOVIET OFFENSIVE STARTS

The sacrifice the Russians have made is hardly appreciated by the British as well as the peoples of other countries. The colossal damage they have

inflicted upon them by their "scorched earth" policy shows that the Russians are determined to perish rather than be slaves under the Nazis. Apart from the destruction of many thousands of humble homes and the terrible suffering caused to millions of inoffensive peasants the demolition of ancient and historic cities like Kiev, and the wasting of fields and the blowing up of valuable mines and factories, the wrecking of the great Dnieper Dam, which stood for Russia as the crowning achievement in her vast work of industrial reconstruction providing energy for nearly 20 per cent of her output in this war of machines was the supreme act of national sacrifice. The whole of the industrialisation of the Ukraine, built up during the two decades at the expense of enormous labour and wealth was smashed to pieces in a week lest it should fall into the hands of the Nazis for at least a few hours. It is this national spirit that has inspired the the Russian people under Bolshevik leadership and this puts to shame the democracies who do nothing more than pay lip sympathy to the heroic resistance of the Russians against the whole of Europe led by the Chancellor of the Reich. No amount of verbal tributes to the Spartan heroism and to the spirit, of self abnegation of the Russians will make them drive the Nazis out of their native soil. They stand in great need of active help in the form of a second front in the continent of Europe to divert the energies of the Germans from the Russian front. The Libyan battle had given them some satisfaction, still however they think that unless Hitler is forced to fight on two fronts in the continent of Europe he will not be easily defeated. Help or no help, the Russians have resolved to fight to the finish and there will be no separate peace or surrender. The fight will end only when either

all the Nazis or all the Russians are wiped out of the face of the earth.

With such determination the Russians fought for six months waiting for winter to turn the table against the Nazis. At the approach of winter the Russians stood alone and bleeding but relentlessly contesting every inch of ground. When winter came they struck heavily and routed the Nazis. The first blow was struck by Marshal Timoshenko's forces in the area of Rostov. The Nazis, in their eagerness to capture the city advanced too far into the midst of the Russians. The Nazis in their eagerness to capture the city advanced too far into the midst of the Russians. Though they occupied the city they were not able to annihilate the Russian troops. When the weather favoured, Timoshenko inflicted on Hitler the biggest territorial defeat of the war. The Nazis were driven out of Rostov and were retreating towards Mariupol, over a hundred miles west of the gateway to the Caucasus. The Russians were hotly pursuing the Nazis in an effort to prevent them from regrouping for a counter-offensive. The rot among the Nazi troops was so alarming that Marshal Von Rundstedt, the commander of the Germans in the south called in two armoured divisions from Crimea to prevent a complete collapse. The Soviet victory was a ray of hope to all the nations and peoples fighting the Nazis. They had expected the collapse of Russia and then the inevitable domination of the world by the Axis Powers, but the Russian recovery after colossal losses inspired the peoples of the United Nations to greater and better efforts and the conviction born of confidence, that the final victory would be theirs, began to re-establish in their hearts.

The recovery of the Russians stiffened the morale of the forces fighting the Germans in other theatres of war and made the Germans and their collaborators realise that the Prussian Army was not invincible as was talked about. It demonstrated the indomitable spirit that electrified the Russian people, men and women equally, at the time of the most critical phase of the war and roused them to superhuman efforts to protect the Fatherland from the contamination of Hitler and his Prussianism. One unforgettable fact is the undaunted courage and daredevilry displayed by the women of Russian villages in organizing and conducting guerilla warfare in the rear of the Nazis and harassing them by destroying their lines of communications and encircling small and isolated groups of soldiers and annihilating them. The atrocities committed by the Nazis in Soviet villages are too cruel to imagine, but the guerilla girls of the Soviet Union demanded blood for blood, tooth for tooth and were revenging every act of Nazi brutality.

## BLOWS AND COUNTER BLOWS

The short lull in the battle of Libya was broken by Rommel's vigorous counter attack to get out of the British steel net. The battle raged furiously for two days and then Rommel was able to make a dent in the British line. He took advantage of this success and made a run to the west in an effort to join other Axis forces. The Eighth Army pursued the Nazis and took a heavy toll of their tanks and captured many prisoners. When the Nazis reached Derna they tried to make a stand against the pursuing Eighth Army. Rommel had lost nearly half of his tank strength but was receiving more help from the *Luftwaffe*. The Axis forces were

reinforced through Benghazi in spite of the vigil kept by the British Navy in the Mediterranean. The object of the Eighth Army was to destroy the Axis forces in Western Desert and it was determined to achieve this goal. The Axis stand near Derna was not successful. Before they could regroup their forces and develop a powerful offensive the Eighth Army was upon them. After sustaining heavy losses in men and materials Rommel showed a pair of heels and he did not make any serious attempt to defend Benghazi, the Axis supply base in the Western Desert. On Christmas Eve British troops entered Benghazi the much bombed port in Libya. With the capture of Benghazi for the second time the whole of Cyrenaica was in British hands. Though the main Axis forces had retreated towards Jedabaya large Italian forces were sulking in various areas and one of the immediate tasks of the Eighth Army was to mop up these forces. At the same time the Eighth Army was pursuing Rommel who was offering some resistance in the area between Benghazi and Jedabaya.

The occupation of Cyrenaica was in itself unimportant apart from one distinct geographical gain, namely Benghazi. Though this port was partly devastated by Axis and partly by British bombing it afforded port facilities when they could be required. Besides the aerodrome at Benghazi would be of the greatest help to start a counter offensive against the Eighth Army. Throughout the battle in Cyrenaica Indian troops played a very prominent part and every time they bore the brunt of the Axis attack. The Indian troops had received very little training before they were called to the battle front in the

Desert, 'still however they conducted themselves magnanimously and to the admiration of the whole world.

The Italian forces guarding Bardia were fighting on while Rommel's *Panzer* forces were on the run. But this beleaguered garrison was mercilessly pounded from sea, land and air. Then British tanks launched an assault and broke the defences. In the early stages of the battle Bardia was surrounded by South African forces thus isolating it from the rest of the Axis forces. It is to be said to the credit of the defenders that they put up stubborn resistance against superior enemy forces and surrendered only when they had no hope of getting further reinforcements. When Bardia fell the British took 5000 prisoners among whom was Major General Schmidt, Chief Administrative Staff Officer of *Panzer Africa*. Also a large number of British soldiers who were captured by the Axis forces in their previous push to Egypt was released from Bardia as soon as it was taken by the British. The capture of Bardia for the second time within a year was a finely organised piece of work by the South Africans. The only post that still remained in Axis hands was Halfaya Pass, where about 7,000 Germans and Italians occupied strong defensive works straddling the main road. But this garrison could not hold on indefinitely. The retreat of Rommel to the borders of Tripolitania completely isolated the garrison defending Halfaya Pass, and the defenders of the Pass were fighting against great odds. They had no air support, no hope of reinforcements and were surrounded by superior enemy forces. Hence it was nothing surprising that this garrison surrendered to the British forces, which assaulted the miniature Siegfried line using strong tank columns supported by a powerful

R. A. F. squadron, after a month of dauntless resistance.

The situation in Libya at the beginning of 1942 was very favourable to the Allies. Cyrenaica had fallen and Axis supply through Benghazi was cut off, this liquidated any imminent threat to Egypt. But the battles in the Western Desert have been one of surprises. General Auchinleck must not have expected such an easy victory, and General Rommel must not have expected the British attack. The main reason for this ding-dong battle is that the Western Desert affords ample room for manoeuvres of the mechanised forces and that army that has the highest manoeuvring ability and a numerical superiority in armoured vehicles can out-maneuvre the enemy. The Libyan battle most eloquently proved the surprises that attended a mechanised warfare in a wide field like the Western Desert. Even General Auchinleck must not have dreamt of the surprise that awaited him. Before the British could establish a strong position in Cyrenaica Rommel launched his counter offensive from Jedabaya. By extending the territory of the battle from Halfaya Pass to Benghazi, General Auchinleck was far away from his supply base and it was not possible to keep large mechanised forces in every area of the wide battle front. This naturally made the advanced British forces comparatively weak. Though Rommel had retreated he had gone nearer to his supply base and as a result could reinforce his army. The loss of Benghazi did not prevent the Italian and German reinforcements reaching Rommel through Tunis. On the British side the Army that had gone ahead could not be very powerful and it was said that a portion of the Middle East Army

was sent to reinforce Singapore in the Far East. One of the chief causes for British withdrawals in all the theatres of war was that Britain had to defend huge territories of different countries far removed from one another and she did not trust the 'sons of the soil' to defend their country. And Britain's mistrust of Indians and her unwillingness to militarise this country accounted a great deal for the shortage of soldiers. If Britain had trusted the Indians and had enlisted their active co-operation in the execution of this war Indians could have supplied the United Nations with tremendous man power that could be used to defend successfully not only the Middle East but also the Far East.

When Rommel launched his unexpected counter-offensive in the last week of January the Eighth Army was to some extent depleted to reinforce the British forces in the Far East and the wear and tear sustained by the armoured vehicles in the previous battles could not be quickly repaired as the Allied supply base was far removed from the battle front. This resulted in General Rommel's success in driving back the British light forces which defended Benghazi and the surrounding areas. Rommel by-passed Benghazi and advanced north east feeling his way cautiously. His success bottled up an Indian infantry brigade in Benghazi. It was believed that the Indian brigade would be entirely lost, but to the admiration of all two columns of this brigade broke through the German lines fighting every man and every obstacle and rejoined the main army. This incident is one of the many brave exploits of the Indian soldiers who carried the torch of traditional Indian military glory wherever they went.

Rommel's counter-offensive was checked east of Benghazi which the Axis forces had captured. As I have already mentioned Benghazi being of great value to the

Axis for rushing reinforcements from the continent, its loss to the Allies meant that they had lost everything of strategical importance in Cyrenaica. Rommel's offensive did not develop into a powerful sweep across Libya, but he was feeling his way cautiously waiting for further reinforcements to arrive. Hence for the next three to four months the battle area in the Western Desert would be confined to the area enclosed by Derna-Mekell and Martuba. Both sides were preparing for the coming battle while constant patrol activities continued. This must have been due to the German reverses in Russia and the necessity of strengthening the forces in all fronts. The heavy losses sustained by the Nazis in the Russian front did affect the morale of the German soldiers and Hitler must have found it difficult to send strong forces to Libya. He was forcing all the countries under the Nazi Heel to contribute largely in men and materials to strengthen his fighting forces, but this could not be done rapidly. Again the non stop British air offensive over Germany's industrial cities must have made the problem of equipping the forces very difficult and unless a respite was given to the fighting in all the fronts it would be difficult to resume the offensive in any front with confidence. The lull in the Libyan front gave Hitler the needed respite to equip and mechanise the forces in Libya. The withdrawals in Russia, though it cost Hitler very heavily, did not in any way destroy the might of the Nazi military machine. It is to be remembered that Hitler has at his command the whole of Europe and it is foolish to expect that the vast resources of men and materials that the continent can give Hitler will dwindle very rapidly and that the war factories distributed throughout the length and breadth of the continent can be destroyed by bombing from the air. Hitler knew that nothing but a

land offensive against his forces in the continent can cripple his power and as he found that the United Nations, in spite of their tall talks, were incapable of launching an offensive against him, he was confident that he could resume the offensive in all fronts after a short respite. He was bidding his time.

While the lull continued in Libya, Malta was subjected to severe bombing by the *Luftwaffe*. It appeared that Hitler had ordered the destruction of Malta, the British watch dog in the central Mediterranean. Malta has been a great source of trouble to the Axis transport vessels and the presence of strong British naval forces at Malta hindered with the free supply of men and materials to the Western Desert. Malta has been standing up to severe German and Italian attacks from the commencement of the war, and the British are resolved to reinforce and hold Malta at any cost. The supply of reinforcements to Malta is a tough job as the Mediterranean is being ploughed by Axis submarines operating from their bases in Sicily, Crete and Greece. It is a risky job to send convoys in the Mediterranean, but Britain took the risk and reinforced the defences of the island fortress. Some of Britain's best war ships including the famous aircraft carrier "Ark Royal" were sunk in the Mediterranean by enemy action. These ships were entrusted with the duty of escorting convoys to Malta. The importance of Malta cannot be minimised. Being at the centre of the Mediterranean it is one of the most strategic naval base from which the 'Italian Lake' can be controlled. It has been proved that though Italy has a powerful navy she has not been able to either capture or at least severely damage Malta. On the other hand the British navy stationed at Malta is a terror to the Italian sailors and they dare not approach the vicinity of this island fortress.

Malta has been the greatest help to the defenders of Tobruk. It is the main source of strength to the British in the Mediterranean. Once Malta falls then both Gibraltar and Suez will be quickly lost to the British. If such an eventuality comes to pass then England will not only lose all her Middle Eastern possessions, but will also be seriously threatened in India from the West. The Mediterranean is one of the key positions in the defence system of the Middle East and hence it is imperative that Britain should hold this island fortress.

The defenders of Malta have made history in this war by their gallant defence against the atrocious Nazi bombing. The Nazis tried to plaster Malta with bombs but completely failed in their attempt. On the other hand Malta inflicted terrible losses on the *Luftwaffe* and drove away every attack. The way in which Malta has defied the 'Prussian Eagle' has earned for the people of this island unstinted praise from all corners of the world. After successive failures to pound the defences of Malta the Nazis were compelled to partially abandon their assault on the island. Malta has stood and will stand up to the mightiest Nazi raids if the British can relentlessly continue to reinforce this much battered island bastion in the Mediterranean.

A powerful Axis offensive started in Libya at the beginning of June 1942. This time Rommel made a powerful thrust against the British position and advanced rapidly towards Tobruk. In this Blitz attack Rommel carried the day, while the British forces were compelled to yield ground for one reason or the other. This time the threat to Tobruk was more serious than it was at any time during the last three years of battle in the Western

desert. The people of the British Empire were shocked at the reverses the Eighth Army was suffering and they were anxious for the safety of Egypt. The Axis offensive was so sudden and fierce that the Eighth Army could not stand it and General Auchinleck, thinking prudence the better part of valour, withdrew his forces to a safe distance in Egypt and prepared to make a stand at the boundary. Before withdrawing into Egypt the Eighth Army offered stubborn resistance near Sidi Rezegh but it could not stem the enemy advance. The withdrawal from this area made the position of Tobruk very precarious. The port was surrounded and its garrison was compelled to surrender to superior enemy forces. The loss of Tobruk was undoubtedly a very great one. Tobruk had stood up valiantly so far against heavy enemy pressure and it was its defiance of the Nazis that enabled General Auchinleck to gain success in his advance against Rommel. If Tobruk had not been in British hands, General Auchinleck could not have managed to spread his steel net around Rommel's *Panzer divisions* and the problem of reinforcing the Eighth Army by sea would have been a slow and tedious job. The fall of Tobruk was a misfortune to the Allies while it gave the best advantage to the Axis. The fall of Tobruk increased the danger to Malta and Alexandria, the only remaining seaport of any account in the Eastern Mediterranean. With the fall of Tobruk the defence of the Mediterranean became Malta's sole burden and one does not know how far this island, greatly invulnerable though it is, can defy the Nazis.

Rommel's advance did not stop with Tobruk. He followed up his success into Egypt up to Mersa Matruh where he was stopped by the British forces. The advance

of Rommel into Egypt and the fall of Tobruk have been the greatest surprises of this war. Though the battle in the Western Desert has been nothing but surprises for both sides Rommel's latest push surpassed all other previous events for it ended the battle of Libya and started the battle of Egypt. Rommel, that doughty fighter is more than a match for the best British general and he is rightly praised by Mr Winston Churchill

## VOLUNTARY RETREAT IN RUSSIA

The Nazis battered the Russian line for six long months with the hope that before winter they would be inside Moscow. The winter came, but the Nazis could not reach Moscow. They were only forty miles from the Russian capital when the severity of winter descended upon them. They had not prepared for a winter fighting and hence were compelled to shiver in the cold looking jealously at the gates of Moscow where the Russians were well protected and clothed. In the war against Russia Hitler's timetable did not work according to schedule and the German commanders were forced to find some excuses for their failures to annihilate the Russian forces before the winter. This colossal defeat of the Nazis not only exploded the myth of German invincibility but also created fear and discontent among the people at home. The feeling that the war would be lost was being expressed in various quarters and Hitler had to order the *Gestapo* to keep up the *morale* at the home front, while he found a scapegoat in the Chief of Staff of the German Army. He sacked his best general and staked his tremendous popularity to tighten up the *morale* of the troops who were disheartened at the prospect of a winter war in Russia. Though Hitler assumed supreme command of the German forces he could

not make any change in the situation, for the Russians took the best advantage of winter and launched a vigorous counter attack against the German positions. The Russian offensive started from the south where Timoshenko drove the Nazis out of Rostov and pressed them back. Soon this offensive spread to the whole Russian front from the Arctic to the Black Sea. Everywhere the Germans were being dislodged from their strong position and hurled back by the Soviet forces. It was not a very easy task as the severity of winter told upon the Russians as well. But the Russians were determined not to give a moment's rest to the Nazis and were resolved to exploit the winter to the full to effect the driving of the Nazis as far as possible.

Soviet counter offensive met with success throughout the whole front. In the Leningrad front the Russians launched a strong attack against the Nazis who had surrounded the city and were successful in pushing the Nazi line considerably back. In the Eastern Ukraine the Russians began to push the Germans back as far as Kharkov and in the central sector a drive against Smolensk was in progress. It is to be remembered that the Germans had been feverishly fortifying their positions and fighting tenaciously to hold on to the positions they had captured earlier. But the cold was very severe and the Russian attacks were bitter and fierce. Under heavy pressure the Nazis had no other go but to withdraw. Hitler came out with the excuse that the cold was too severe for the soldiers fighting in the front and hence his troops were voluntarily withdrawing to safer quarters. It is a mistake to think that Hitler will withdraw his forces an inch backward if he can hold on. More than the cold it was the grim and resolute attack of the Soviet forces that drove the Nazis back. The

Soviet forces could not achieve this victory in a couple of days or months: they fought for nearly six months to push the German line sufficiently back.

The Soviet forces advanced slowly but they had blunted Hitler's striking power and had wrested the mastery of the air from the Germans. The slowness in the Russian advance was inevitable because of the condition existing at the front. The whole of the front was a quagmire. Where the fighting was the heaviest this was the most unpleasant state. There was no opportunity for clearing away the fouled ice and snow around habitations and trenches. Bodies of dead animals and many corpses were being disclosed with the thaw, and their putrefaction was being slowly poured into every stream and hollow in the great plains. Hordes of flies and insects were emerging to spread disease still further. On the German side the situation was still worse. Their supply line was blocked by the snow and they experienced the greatest difficulty in feeding and clothing the soldiers at the front. Since they had not anticipated a winter campaign they had not made provisions for the winter-clothings of the soldiers. The Nazis were stripping the occupied countries of all clothes to provide the soldiers. The state of enclosed German forces were pitiable. They were weakened by a shortage of food and were living on contaminated water. In their desperate effort to exist they deprived the civil population of villages in the neighbourhood of everything and again committed acts of brutality with the life and property of these innocent people. In spite of all these difficulties bitter fighting continued with the Soviet forces pressing the Germans backward inflicting heavy losses on the enemy's mechanised units.

The rot that had set among the German army as, a result of the Russian offensive' was reflected in Hitler's speech in the Reichstag, in the last week of April, 1942, demanding for special powers. This speech was quite different from others he had delivered on many occasions. He no longer boasted of immediate German victories, but simply put the blame for Germany's misfortunes on the Jews. He said, "The racial question is the key to world history. The hidden powers which incited Britain in the first world war were the Jews. The force which paralysed us was a Jewish one. The Jews have manoeuvred the British Empire into a crisis. The Jews are the bearers of Bolshevik infection. The Jews are the war-mongers. The Jews have brought America into the war, which is senseless and unnecessary from the American view-point. International Jewish war-mongering has been recognised for what it is by German and Allied soldiers."

The tone of the speech was on the whole defensive. Hitler was once again harping on the same string of Jewish intrigue in the world. It is difficult to imagine that the Jews, the smallest racial group in the world, can bring about a world conflict whenever they wish. One who has carefully studied German history will realise that all German monarchs were obsessed by Prussian militarism and this Prussianism led the German people into bloody wars with their neighbours at the behest of their monarchs. This is amply proved by the fact that, in all wars in Europe Germany had been the aggressor.

Referring to conditions in the battle-front Hitler said, "When last I spoke there was in the east a winter such as had not been known for 140 years. The German front was withdrawn to a general line stretching from Taganrog to Lake Ladoga and this difficult operation was

Propaganda over the ether that the Russian Army was completely annihilated. Hitler unconsciously gave credit to the stubborn resistance of the Soviet Union though he characterised Bolshevism as a Jewish creed.

In conclusion he said, "In this fight truth will be victorious, but truth is on our side. I bind my name and my life unconditionally to the fate of the German people. I have no request to make to the Almighty except that He should watch over us as in the past and grant that I may live as long as is necessary in His eyes for the fateful struggle of the German people."

The concluding remark of Hitler reveals that he firmly believes in his mission and that he is willing to sacrifice his life in the cause of that mission. There can be no better example of sincerity of purpose and of the dedication of the self for the cause of the nation. Here lies Hitler's secret to power, but by launching his offensive against Russia Hitler met with his equal. Like Hitler, Stalin also believes in his mission, and has dedicated his life to establish Bolshevism in this world. Whatever may be the outcome of this war the coming generation will see Bolshevism firmly established in most countries and Fascism destroyed. Fascism may triumph in battles, but when peace comes to be established Fascism must disappear, for Fascism can live only in war or in perpetuating it. And since Fascism implies the domination of the weaker nations by the stronger, its ultimate downfall will be brought about by the same people whom it puts down under its goose step.

Though the Russian offensive did not achieve very great results it had regained large tracts of land overrun by the Nazis and had caused great destruction to Germany's war machinery. Above all it had saved Russia's key cities,

Moscow, Leningrad, and Rostov, from the imminent destruction that threatened them. This was of the foremost importance to the Russians as they could maintain intact their lines of communication from the Arctic to the Black Sea.

In this war Russians have proved to be the toughest fighters in the world. They have dispelled the illusion that was prevalent in the democratic countries that the Russians will not prove to be a tough job for the Nazis. When Hitler started his offensive against the Russians he also was under the same impression and thought that he could finish the Russian campaign within a few weeks. The Russians have proved a hard nut to crack and now after a year of war against the Soviet Union, the German leaders are not confident of a quick victory against the Bolsheviks.

## SECOND BLITZ IN RUSSIA

In the middle of Spring Hitler ordered the second Blitz offensive against Russia. The winter had gone and the weather was becoming more favourable for a large scale attack. Hitler knew that without settling accounts with Russia the war would not end. So he set out to complete the task he commenced a year ago. This time he did not plan an all out offensive along the whole front, but decided upon conquering the whole of the Ukraine and getting hold of the Caucasus oilfields. Hence the main German drive was directed towards the southern sector. The German strategy is easy to understand. Mild operations were maintained in the Briansk, Moscow and Kalinin sectors in order to prevent the Russians from throwing all their weight against the main German advance in the Rostov sector. The Nazis' drive to the Volga was intended to cut the Red Army in two and

to uncover the whole flank of Caucasus which would then be isolated and vulnerable. One of the biggest battles of this war raged in front of Sabastopol. The first fierce battle in the second offensive was fought for the city of Sabastopol. The Germans admitted that they had to fight bitterly for every yard of ground and yet the enemy seemed to be ferociously resisting, often launching a bayonate charge. This time German preparations were many times larger than those of the previous year. Against Sabastopol alone they could spare 1000 aircrafts and 10 of the best divisions of the German Army. The defenders of the city wiped out battalions after battalions, but the Germans returned to the attack with renewed vigour and with a stronger tank division and better bombers. Nothing but the numerical superiority of the Germans compelled the valliant Soviet soldiers to give up Sabastopol. The loss of Sabastopol was a severe blow to the Russians for they had lost the most important port in the Black Sea. It was the chief naval base and the Soviet Black Sea Fleet was stationed there. The capture of Sabastopol helped the Nazis immensely for they were on their way to drive the Russian navy out of the Black Sea. The only remaining naval base in the Black Sea is Novorossisk and if this port also falls to the Germans than the Soviet Black Sea Fleet will either have to make an exit through the Dardallenes to the Mediterranean or face destruction at the hands of the Nazis. During the first offensive the Germans tried their utmost to capture Sabastopol, but the Russians flung back all Nazi attacks and kept the port in their hands. This time the Nazis were successful.

The second battle started from the Kursk-Kharkov area and was directed against cutting the Moscow-Rostov railway and then reaching the Don. In this sector the

German advance was rapid. Within a couple of weeks they were able to advance 110 miles crossing the Don river and cutting the railway. This was the most dangerous drive for it aimed at reaching Stalingrad, Russia's 'steel city'. Stalingrad is of the greatest importance to the Russians because it is the foremost industrial city where tanks and other heavy war machines are manufactured and it occupies a strategical position on the Volga which is the chief oil route from the Caspian Sea to north Russia.

The third drive was towards Rostov. This time the Nazis did not march along the coast of the Sea of Azov, but descended on the city from the north west. The drive towards Rostov was not the least important. It was aimed at the Caucasus oilfields. Rostov is the gateway to the Caucasus and if it falls the Germans will straight way march to the Caucasus oilfields and they can also drive southward towards the port of Novorossisk. No doubt it is a grandiose plan and the Germans are determined to execute it to success. In spite of the non stop bombing of German industrial cities by the R A F Hitler could mass thousands of tanks and aircrafts on the Russian front. There was no sign that the German war machine had suffered seriously from Britons 'air blitz' over Germany and occupied France.

the Germans from proceeding to Saratov, a strategic junction on the Volga oil route. The oil supplied from Baku by way of the Caspian reaches Saratov and thence to Moscow and other centres. Therefore the capture of Saratov by the Germans would completely cut off Russia's traffic along the Volga and thus would deprive the Russians of the Caucasian oil. Even if the Russians hold the Caucasus the fall of Saratov would prevent oil reaching Moscow and other centres through the Volga. The defence of Voronej therefore is vital to the Russians.

The battle that raged in the Don bend was the mightiest and the fiercest ever known to the history of the human race. Both sides were hurling masses of men and materials to the front and unmindful of the ever mounting losses the battles continued. For Russia as well as for Germany it was a struggle for life and death. Russia was fighting for her very existence while Hitler was fighting for the domination of Europe. But a defeat to Hitler in the Russian front will mean the end of the Third Reich the unceremonious break down of his great mission.

Though the Germans progressed in all sectors at the commencement of the offensive they were stopped in front of key points and were compelled to fight street by street and house by house to capture these points. By the end of July, the Russians evacuated Rostov and Novo Cherkassk. Rostov and Bataisk 10 miles south of Rostov were taken by storm by the Germans. In the battle for these two cities the Germans used more than 1000 tanks. Before it was stormed Rostov was surrounded. The Russians stood up to the tank attack with field guns and anti tank rifles but in the end they had to withdraw. It is silly to give the figures of the dead in such battles for the

losses were tremendous and colossal on both sides. On both sides hills of dead were used as barricades. The evacuation of Rostov threatened the Black Sea port of Novorossisk and opened up the road to Caucasian oil field. The fall of Ros'tov was a terrible blow to the Soviet for it started the battle for oil which is most vital in mechanised warfare. The Russians were not in the least disheartened by this loss, though they fully realised its significance. They prepared with a grim determination to stem the Nazi advance towards the oil districts of the Caucasus.

After the capture of Rostov the Germans developed two offensives, one in the south towards Novorossisk and the other in the north east towards Stalingrad. In the meanwhile another German army was proceeding along the foothills of the Caucasus towards the Mikop and Grogny oil fields. Now the battle in Russia has reached the most critical stage. If the Germans succeed in their latest offensive and capture Stalingrad and the Caucasus oil fields then the battle in Russia will certainly be weakened and however hard the Russians may try they will find it well-nigh impossible to dislodge the Nazis from their newly acquired positions. The Russians knew that they were passing through the most critical period in the history of their country, but hoped that they would be able to stem the Nazi advance further east. Stalingrad, situated on the Volga near the end of the Don Volga canal where the two great rivers come close together, if it would fall to the Germans would enable them to cut the traffic that piles on the broad bosom of the mighty Volga and carries oil supplies to the northern districts. Stalingrad has a special appeal to Stalin. He defended the city against the White Russians in 1917. The city was then called Tsaritsyn but was renamed in his honour. The fall of Stalingrad

will in itself cannot completely cut off the Caucasus oil-fields from the rest of Russia, though it will greatly hamper oil traffic. There is a railway running from Astrakan, the seaport on the Caspian Sea at the mouth of the Volga to the interior. But the fall of Stalingrad will give the Germans a foothold on the east bank of the Volga whence they can start their offensive towards Astrakan. Hence the fall of Stalingrad will mean a tremendous loss to the Russians and hence they can be expected to defend the city to the last man.

When the Russians found that the threat to Stalingrad was becoming more and more serious, they launched offensives in the north, in the Moscow, Riev and Leningrad sectors to relieve the pressure in the south. The Russians did secure local success but they could not exploit these successes to launch a large scale offensive and unless the Russians develop a large scale offensive they cannot divert the Germans from the south.

## STALINGRAD MAKES HISTORY

By the middle of August Stalingrad was besieged by the German forces. Hitler's intention in this latest drive against Stalingrad was to strike a double blow at the Soviet Union. In the first place to deprive the Russians of their oil and to destroy their tank manufacturing industries and secondly to take for himself the Russian oil and Russian war-weapon industries. Hitler's drive against Stalingrad was very vigorous. He was attempting to take the city by a frontal tank attack. But the outer defences of the "steel city" proved to be very strong even for the powerful Nazi tanks. The Germans completely failed to capture the city by their frontal attack and hence resorted to flank attacks. These attacks were assisted by the *Luftwaffe*.

which rained the city raining bombs everywhere. The Russian workers continued to work at their tables undismayed by the bursting of bombs very close to them. They were resolved not to yield to Nazi bombing. When the workers were freed from their labours in the factories due to the destruction of the plants they joined the regular army to fight at the front. The population of the city showed exemplary courage during air raids and went about their work as if nothing serious had happened. Every bomb explosion in the streets of Stalingrad added new strength to the *morale* of the people and the destruction of every plant doubled their resolve to destroy Hitler and Hitlerite Germany. Before the Germans reached the suburbs of the city they had lost tremendously in men and materials, especially in tanks and the nearer they approached the city the stronger and fiercer the opposition they encountered.

It is very important to remember that the Russians were not fighting a defensive battle but were on the offensive. They attacked the Nazis by counter blows inflicting very heavy losses and disputing every inch of ground. This had a great effect for it slowed down the Nazi advance. Regardless of their colossal losses the Germans brought to the front fresh masses of tanks and men and continued their thrust. After fifteen days of bitter fighting the Germans were no nearer to the city. They were still hammering at the outer defences and could not move forward. Russians also were suffering heavy losses but were determined not to allow the Nazis to enter Stalingrad. The epic battle for Stalingrad can be called the 'Verdun' of the Second World War. It can be said without any fear of contradiction that the battle raging round the city of Stalingrad can have no parallel in the

history of the world and that the Russians are second to none in the world for bravery and patriotism. The 'granite-like-firm' stand taken by the Russians in front of Stalingrad filled the whole world with admiration and baffled the Nazi militarists. How long the Russians will hold Stalingrad cannot be predicted, but one thing is as clear as crystal, and that is, the Germans will not take Stalingrad without suffering the greatest loss in men and materials and if ever they capture the city they will find it completely destroyed by the Russians. The losses inflicted by the Soviet forces on the Nazis will be so great that it will, for a short time, cripple the Nazis' striking power. After such heavy losses even if the Germans enter the city, they will not be strong enough to launch any large scale offensive against the oilfields in the Caucasus and in the Moscow and Leningrad sectors in the north. Before the next offensive starts Russian winter will set in and the second Russian offensive will be launched. And who can say that Hitler will be able to stand another war winter in Russia? Perhaps, the coming winter will be the beginning of Nazi reverses; perhaps the Nazis will never get the Russian oil. Anything may happen in the coming forty days. They are most critical for the forces of democracies and if the Russians hold on a little more they can hope for a bright future after a year of the darkest war.

It is but natural for the Russians to feel that England and America are forcing them to bear the severest pressure of the Nazi offensive. They have been fighting for the last one year single-handed against the combined might of the whole Europe and hence they will naturally desire that the British and American troops should fight the Germans on another front to relieve the pressure on them

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Hence Mr. Churchill, an out and out anti-Communist, visited the Kremlin and shook hands with his adversary in ideology, but friend in adversity. I can assert that Mr. Churchill's visit to Moscow and his cordial talks with the Bolshevik leader have made the least change in Churchill's anti-communist sentiments, for I view the meeting between Churchill and Stalin as one brought about by the exigency of the war to tackle a problem of the moment. The assertion in the British Press that the meeting has knit closer the ties between Russia and England is opened to question. To me it appears that at the end of this war, if it ends in a victory to the democracies England will remain a Capitalist-Imperialist state, while Russia will retain her Bolshevism. The years following the end of the war may see a defeated Germany and a starving China suddenly taking to Bolshevism, but such a change will not come either to England or to America. On the other hand if Hitler wins Fascism comes to stay.

Then came the Dieppe raid on the heels of Mr. Churchill's visit to Moscow which seemed to suggest that Mr. Churchill had been to Moscow for the very purpose of talking over with Stalin the actual plan of opening a second front in Europe. The Dieppe raid was planned with meticulous care and carried out with a large amount of success. The raid was intended to be a miniature invasion of the continent, for hundreds of tanks and heavy guns were landed and a large army of specially trained troops, mainly composed of Canadians, embarked ashore and advanced against the enemy's defences. Though the Germans were taken by surprise they did put up fierce resistance. The invaders succeeded in their objective of destroying enemy's installations and wrecking his fortifications, but this was effected with considerable losses to themselves.

On Mr. Churchill's own admission the loss sustained by the Empire troops was nearly 50% of the total force. Apart from the destruction of enemy's defences the raid had one very valuable lesson to teach. It made the British realise the strength of the enemy and also the difficulties that an invasion of the continent would bring forth. This should help them to perfect the invasion army wherever it is deficient. But the fact that Britain did not venture to repeat such raids reveals that the lesson learned was too good to encourage a second experiment. Britain's delay in opening a second front must have been caused by the deterrent effects of the Dieppe raid.

The battle in Russia progressed in favour of the Germans. The southern end of the drive along the Black Sea coast towards Novorossisk met with some success for the invaders. They besieged the port and captured it after a couple of days of bitter fighting. The valliant co-operation of the Soviet Fleet with the land forces could not save the port. The fall of this port drove the Soviet Fleet to the next port, Tuaspe, which is one of the smallest ports in the Black Sea. If Tuaspe also falls the Russian Fleet will be compelled to get out of the Black Sea.

As I pen these pages reports from the Stalingrad front speaks of German advance into the city itself. But the Russians are fighting every street and every house. The street fighting has been going on for more than a week and yet the Germans do not claim that they have captured the city. The Russians have evacuated their women and children from the city and are calling upon the entire manpower to defend the city. They have converted every house into a fortress and during the course of fighting streets and houses change hands many times. The latest development

shows that the Russians are launching strong counter-attacks north-west and south-west of Stalingrad to relieve the strain on the city, but how far these attacks can help to throw the Nazis out of Stalingrad is to be seen.

The fall of Stalingrad will not end the war, but if Stalingrad is occupied by the Germans they hold control of the largest wheat area of Russia in the Don bend and as I have previously pointed out it would be a hazardous task for the Russians to recapture the city. As the winter approaches both sides are preparing to suffer the hardships that Nature will impose upon them. It seems that Hitler himself is very dubious about a rapid victory in the Russian front. In his speech on 29th September, 1942 at the *Sportspolast*, opening the "winter help" campaign he said "In the winter of 1941-42, the German army and people were protected by Destiny. Worse cannot come this winter. There are only a few months in which one can reasonably wage war in Russia." He did not assure the people of the final victory coming this year or the next. The only assurance he gave them was that the Russians would be driven out of Stalingrad and then they would not be able to oust the Nazis from the city.

The tremendous thrust of the Germans towards Volga from the city may succeed and if they keep Stalingrad for six months then they will exploit the wheat fields and coal mines in the Ukraine to the utmost thus strengthening their economic position greatly. If this comes to pass the Russians will be hard put to continue the war without substantial material help from the United Nations, especially Britain and America. Stalingrad is fighting heroically and its fate will decide a major issue of the war.

The way in which Stalingrad is fighting indicates that Russian strategy is not to simply hold the city. Russians

in the city of Stalingrad, are waging a war for the annihilation of the Germans. It is a war of annihilation of the Nazis, and as such it aims at the liberation of the world from brutal Fascism. It is not Britain and America, who talk much about the war of liberation, that fight for liberation, but it is Russia, that is fighting for the liberation of the world silently but magnanimously. If the Western Powers, who do require a little "prodding" as Mr. Wilkie rightly observed, fail to open a second front in time to assist Russia, they will certainly commit an act which will amount to a stab in the back of the Russians. In other words it will be tantamount to sabotaging the war of liberation.

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# HITLER'S WAR

(PART VI)

## AFRICA REGAINED

Next to the Russian theatre the African battlefield flung most of the surprises of the Second World War. Since the commencement of the war a ding-dong battle had been raging in the African Desert and defeats and successes were suffered alternately by the contesting forces. Rommel, that tough fighter managed to recover with surprising rapidity from every defeat and before the victorious Allied troops could contemplate the next move launched a new offensive and that with a mightier force than that he employed on previous occasions. Thus blows and counter-blows came in quick succession retreats following advances and advances after reaching a climax collapsing with accelerated velocity thereby creating a major crisis every three or four months.

Cyrenaica was the scene of most of these battles and the coastal cities and harbours in that region were occupied and evacuated, constructed and demolished, besieged and defended with mathematical precision for nearly half a dozen times till at length the Axis forces were halted by the British Eighth Army at El Alamein in Egypt. Rommel's advances into Egypt synchronised with the Nazi advances into Russia in the summer of 1942 and it was feared that a major crisis of the gravest character would develop if Rommel's forces succeeded in reaching Suez and thus wrested from the British the control of the

Mediterranean It was well known that Hitler had commanded Rommel to reach the Suez Canal before his forces could reach the Southern Caucases He was planning the biggest of pincer movements never before planned and executed by any of the famous generals known to History If Rommel can reach Suez and then Iraq and Iran and thence march to the Caspian Sea Hitler will join him and the Caucases and if such a grandiose plan succeeds Hitler can swallow the whole of the Middle East without creating the necessity of facing the Turkish bayonets In fact Turkey will be enveloped and forced to surrender to the Nazis

The Allies were not without their chances in this war The fact that General Auchinleck stemmed the Axis advance in the Qattara Depression did not demonstrate in my opinion the superiority of the Eighth Army over *Afrika Korps* but showed that the tide of battle was turning in favour of the Allies It was a piece of luck that came the way of the Allies The holding of the *Africa Korps* before El Alamein did not mean much it just gave a momentary easiness The threat to the Suez Canal remained but the gravity of the situation was fully realised by the leaders of the United Nations They had tremendous confidence in the men they had chosen to command their fighting units but the only problem which often defied them was the proper equipment of the forces fighting in far off battle fields The incalculable difficulties of transport and equipment stared the Allied Commanders in the face As soon as the transport problem was satisfactorily dealt with they could carry the day in the actual fighting The leaders of the United Nations were aware of the U boat menace that threatened to sink every ship that carried arms and other war materials to

Africa, but they were determined to keep the Eighth Army well equipped even at the sacrifice of dozens of ships and hundreds of seamen. The war at sea has been, and still is, a thorn in the side of British and American Navy, yet the British and American seamen defied Axis submarines and carried arms and ammunitions, and food and clothing to the Eighth Army. It was the resoluteness of the leaders of the United Nations in equipping their forces in the African Desert that brought about a change in the fortunes of war in the Desert.

After having stemmed the advance of the Axis forces in the Qattara Depression, General Auchinleck was making the best of a bad bargain by holding as many heights as he could and pinning down Rommel in front of Alamein. Besides he was not allowing Rommel the respite that the latter so urgently needed to re-group, re-organise, and consolidate the positions he had gained. Rommel had been forced by General Auchinleck's tactics to rush his jaded lorried infantry up and down the desert front to the threatened sectors, while his *panzers* were forced to sit in stony hot desert ridge of the country to watch British tanks.

For the next four months there ensued a full in the Egyptian campaign occasionally broken by dog-fights in the air, patrol activities on land, and bombing of Axis convoy in the Mediterranean. Both sides were preparing for a major offensive. A race had started, a race for supplies, a race for supremacy in equipment and striking power. In this race the Allies were successful. In the first place the R. A. F. had established supremacy in the air and this enabled the United Nations to strafe the transport lorries of the Axis carrying supplies in their *forces* in Egypt. Successful co-ordination of the three services

enabled the United Nations to strike at the Axis forces at sea, on land and in the air simultaneously. Though the accounting of Rommel's forces was purely a British job, America had contributed a great deal to the supply of equipment.

No major offensive started before the last week of October. In the last week of October the Eighth Army felt sufficiently strong to strike at the Panzers and before Rommel could realise what was happening General Montgomery launched his offensive. The Germans admitted their surprise at the weight and ferocious intensity of the attack. Here it must be remembered that a change in the personal of the men in command in Egypt was made and Gen. Auchinleck was replaced by Gen. Montgomery as the C-in-C. of the British Eighth Army. This new offensive undoubtedly speaks volumes for the efficiency and organizing capacity of the Allies in speeding up large and perhaps overwhelming quantities of supplies to Egypt. All the same it should not be thought that Rommel was caught napping. He had reinforced his army considerably and fortified his positions. But it is a fact that he could not throw into the battle more steel and fire than his enemies, and this was one of the chief reasons for his failure to hold the Eighth Army, apart from launching his own offensive.

In spite of the great superiority in the weight of metal the Allies could throw into the battle, it took twelve days for the Eighth Army to make dents in the Axis line. For twelve days the battle raged, fiercely each side attempting to inflict the largest possible damage on the other. It was not a battle for the immediate gaining of territory, but a battle of destruction. The losses were enormous on both sides, but when the battle ended the Germans found themselves showing a clean pair of heels.

The losses sustained by the Germans in the twelve days of battle were such as was impossible of immediate replacement. The Eighth Army's chief strategy was to encircle the Nazis in their strongly fortified positions and then to destroy them. Over 20,000 prisoners were taken and the valuable materials captured consisted of 350 tanks, 400 guns and many thousands of vehicles. A special feature of this offensive was that the opposing Italians showed no inclination to fight and they were the first to surrender. Rommel, leaving a few battalions to fight a rearguard action, retreated to the Libyan frontier hoping perhaps to put up a better fight there. The R A F. relentlessly pursued the retreating Germans and rained bombs on troops, transports and wrecked all means of communications. The Allied airmen were attempting to cut off the Germans from retreat, but this they could not completely accomplish, all the same they could throw the Germans into confusion and thus disorganize them. The Eighth Army also was in hot pursuit of Rommel's men and to its great surprise found that the Germans did not show any attempt to give battle. The Eighth Army found itself occupying town after town, and city after city without having to fight any major battle till it reached Benghazi.

At this time when Rommel suffered his first major defeat a large scale offensive was launched in French North Africa by American forces. The time chosen for this new offensive was most opportune as it coincided with the commencement of the Russian winter offensive in Europe and the successful offensive of the Eighth Army in Egypt. This new front was greatly welcomed in all the countries of the United Nations and it was universally hoped that the American offensive in North Africa

would be the beginning of the opening of the Second Front

On 8th November 1942 the White House announced that the American forces had landed on the French North African coast in order to forestall an invasion of that country by Germany and Italy. It was well known that pressure was being brought to bear on Vichy France by Hitler to accelerate the German war effort in Africa. This meant that French Africa should help by all methods Rommel and his men fighting British Eighth Army. The help that Hitler demanded of Vichy France implied that French North Africa should supply men and materials for the Axis Army in Africa. Refusal to comply with Hitler's demand would certainly bring the Nazis into French North Africa and Nazi and Fascist agents were plotting to undermine Vichy authority. Nazi occupation of F N Africa would have become a fact sooner or later and if the United Nations were to wait for such an eventuality to commence their offensive they would have failed miserably. Strategy demanded that the United Nations should be first on the battle field if they desired to win the war against the Axis forces. Hence they acted.

The news of the landing of the American forces was announced just at the time when the Americans actually landed. The American forces were commanded by Gen. D. Eisenhower and they were equipped with adequate weapons of modern warfare. In a message to the people of France and the French in Africa President Roosevelt said: "I know well how precious to the French people is the heritage of your hearths, your culture and the principle of democracy in France. I salute you and declare again and again my faith in liberty, equality and fraternity."

"There are no two nations more united by the bonds of history and mutual friendship than the people of France and of the United States of America. The Americans with the help of the United Nations, are doing all they can to establish a healthy future as well as the restoration of the ideals of freedom and democracy for all those who lived under the Tricolour.

"We are coming among you to repulse the cruel invaders who wished to strip you, for ever, of the right to govern yourselves, to reprove you the right to worship God as you wish, and to snatch from you the right to live your lives in piece and security. We are coming among you solely to crush and destroy your enemies.

"Believe us, we do not wish to do you any harm. We assure you that once the threat of Germany and Italy has been removed from you, we will immediately leave your territory. I appeal to your realism, to your own interests and your French national ideals. Do not, I beg of you, hinder this great purpose. Render your assistance my friends, where you can, and we will see the return of the glorious day when freedom and peace will again reign in the world. Long live eternal France."

President Roosevelt's appeal to the French people points out clearly that the Americans expected some opposition from the Vichy forces in Africa. Even if they succeed in crushing such opposition there will develop troubles regarding the administration of French North Africa. There will at least be two sections of people, one owing allegiance to General De Gaulle and the other to Marshal Petain. This was anticipated, but the United Nations first wanted to effect the occupation of the French territory in Africa.

Mr Churchill's visit to the Near East and the change he effected in the personal of the men commanding the forces in Egypt focussed the attention of the world to the coming offensive in that theatre. But none dreamt of the new offensive that was launched by the Americans in French North Africa. The preparations for this new offensive were very cleverly concealed. The secret of the objectives was well preserved. A great naval fleet was assembled, large armies gathered and put aboard transports, and innumerable vessels containing the complicated paraphernalia of modern warfare including all kinds of aeroplanes, were brought together in one immense convoy. The first the world heard of it was a broadcast message from President Roosevelt that the United States troops were landing in North Africa. It was expected that the new offensive would be launched from Dakar. But the forces that landed in North Africa were too large to confine their operations from one single port. The great convoy divided part making for the Mediterranean port of Algiers and part for the Morocco coast north and south of Casablanca.

In this new offensive there was remarkable co ordination between the three services the army the navy and the air force. That the British Government was aware of the plans of this new offensive was clarified by the declaration from London that Britain was sending an Expeditionary Force to assist the Americans. This new offensive took the Nazis by surprise. The offensive meant that the Germans had to face a double front in Africa. Though they could count upon the assistance of Vichites they knew that French Africa would not implicitly listen to Marshal Petain. There would be divisions among the French in Africa but the superior military strength of the

Americans would win over them. Besides, the German people were alarmed at the prospect of having to fight on so many fronts at a time when their men were losing battle in Egypt and Russia. Hence it was necessary for Hitler to speak to his men words of courage and hope lest they should get disheartened at the turn events were taking. Just after the launching of the American offensive in Africa, Hitler spoke to his people. It was on the anniversary of the "Beer Cellar" putsch. He said, "We could have had victory in 1918, but the German people did not deserve it. There will be no repetition of 1918. Destiny will give victory to him who most deserves it.

"Why are we fighting so far from home today? To keep war from our home country and spare it the sufferings which it would otherwise undergo. Our enemies both internal and external, are the same today as before. The Kaiser capitulated, but I will never capitulate. Indubitably we are today the best organised people in the world. I am quite confident about the experience of every German who has fought in the East and has come back to Germany. There is not one who will not say that if ever there was a real socialist country, it is Germany.

"Today we are very much stronger than ten years ago. The people on our side are more numerous than those against us. The British say that they have never lost a war. That is not true. They have lost many wars. But it is true that they have always fought their wars to a finish. If Poland had accepted our offer we should have paid less attention to our army; then one day the storm would have broken from the east and fighting would have come right to the outskirts of Berlin. At that time I was sorry that my offer was turned down. Today I am glad,

answer. Our spirits have not been idle and they will get an answer which will take their breath away. Today every German knows that we are engaged in a life and death struggle. Every German must believe in me. He must become a fanatic. Think only that this war will decide whether Germany shall live or die and if you realise this your every deed, and your every thought will be a prayer for our Germany."

The speech was significant in certain respects. In the first place Hitler could not offer any plausible excuse for the failure to take Stalingrad; secondly he admitted the ferocity of the British air attacks on Germany and the characteristic determination of the British to fight their battles to a finish; thirdly he asked his people to accept the drawbacks in Africa as inevitable and promised them that he would retort when opportunity would favour him. He had no concrete plan of any offensive to be launched to offer but told the German people to trust the grandiose organisation of his party and to put faith in his leadership to save Germany from destruction. The speech was devoid of boasts and threats. It was one of the mildest and perhaps the most defensive speech of the German Chancellor. In short the speech revealed that Hitler and his people did not relish the new offensive.

The immediate reaction of Hitler to the American offensive was the occupation of Vichy France. He realised that the time had come to cease playing the part of the saviour of the French Nation and to come out openly as the virtual conqueror of the French. In ordering the German troops to march into unoccupied France Hitler said, "Britain, and later, the United States have made various attempts to carry the war into Europe. After these attempts have failed everywhere they have proceeded to

attack territories of the French Empire, thereby threatening the coasts of Southern France. That is why I have given orders to the German army to advance from the occupied zone and take up positions in the unoccupied zone to safeguard this zone against an Anglo-American attack "

Hitler's message to his troops contained a threat to Vichy. The message added, "The German Government wishes to collaborate with the French Army, but will brook no resistance. This step has been made necessary by our desire to preserve the future of the French Empire, and above all, its former possessions "

This threat sealed the fate of France (Vichy France). When the Nazis occupied the whole of France Marshal Pétain and his colleagues became virtual prisoners and were used to do Hitler's bidding. This latest move of Hitler hastened the end of French resistance in Africa.

Marshal Pétain protested against the American offensive in Africa as well as against Hitler's order to his troops to occupy Vichy France, but he was ignored by both. In Vichy France there was no opposition, but in North Africa the American forces encountered a little resistance. The land forces under the command of Vichites put up a fight against the American Force that had already landed while the French Fleet under the command of Admiral Darlan had a hit at the American Fleet that was carrying the Expeditionary Force to Africa. This resistance was short lived because of two reasons. First Gen Giraud, who had a very good hold on the fighting services, gave the slip to the Gestapo and the French Police in Vichy France and escaped to Africa. This General realised the utter futility of continuing resistance in Africa against great odds and so his sole concern on reaching

Africa was to terminate the bloody fight that was being conducted by the Vichy Commanders. His efforts in this direction bore fruit. Admiral Darlan was simply playing for time. After making a show of resistance he joined hands with the Americans and ordered the French Navy to cease hostilities against the American and British troops. Thus before the end of the first week of the campaign in North Africa the American and British forces were masters of the situation and had all the ports and cities under their control. Besides they prevented further fighting between the factions of the French people by coming to an understanding with Admiral Darlan and Gen. Giraud to carry on the civil administration in French North Africa. These new French leaders agreed to collaborate with the Allies to conduct the war against the Germans whom they proclaimed as the permanent enemy of France. The De Gaulist forces had already joined hands with the Allies and they were doing their best to assist the Americans to land. Thus after a week of bloody fighting here and there the French forces in Africa united with the American and British forces to conduct the war against the Nazis.

Hitler could not allow the whole of Africa to slip from his hands. He could not allow the new offensive to develop in favour of the Allies, for that would mean that he would lose all naval and air bases on the African coast which in turn would give his enemies full control of the Mediterranean and thus would facilitate their efforts to invade Europe from the south. It was imperative that he should have at least a few bases in Africa so that he could renew his offensive. Again Rommel was fighting a losing battle in Libya and in case he found it difficult to continue operations in the desert he should have a port through

which he could withdraw his troops to Germany. Apart from launching a fresh offensive at a future date, in order to save the forces already locked up in Africa Hitler should be in possession of some parts of the country on the African coast of the Mediterranean. This decided Hitler to send troops into Tunisia. In spite of the Royal Navy's opposition the German transport vessels were able to carry safely a sufficiently large body of men and tanks across the sea to Tunisia. With a strong force in Tunisia the Germans were able to take possession of Bona, Bizerta, and Tunis. They infiltrated further south and occupied the whole of northern Tunisia. This move slowed down the American advance from Algeria. The occupation of Tunisia by the Nazis served as a bastion between the forces fighting in Algeria and Libya and it barred the way of the American troops to join the British Eighth Army. One of the chief objectives of the new offensive was to carry the war into Libya through the back door and thus to destroy Rommel and his men before they could escape to Germany. This attempt, though made with great courage, meticulous planning and bull-dog tenacity, was foiled by the Nazis.

Thus the American offensive came to a halt in Tunisia and even after months of tenacious fighting there was no appreciable improvement in the line held by the Allies. The Nazis were making vigorous attacks on the Allied line and at times succeeded in making a wedge here and there but apart from that they could not gain any appreciable victory. Thus a stalemate ensued.

At the time the American and the British forces in North Africa had won over the French forces, the British Eighth Army had driven Rommel's men out of Egypt and into Libya. The Eighth Army was in hot pursuit of the

retreating Nazis. The British had recaptured Tobruk and were heading for Benghazi. In his non-stop flight from Egypt to Benghazi Rommel suffered very heavily in tanks and aeroplanes. The prisoners taken by the Eighth Army amounted to thousands of the best German soldiers apart from the numerous Italians who had already surrendered. The Germans were credited with speed when they were conducting their Blitz battles in all the theatres of war. But the speed with which the Eighth Army routed Rommel and his men out of Egypt and Libya surpassed all the speediest battles waged by the Nazis ever before in this Second World War. Before the completion of the first month of the latest offensive the remnants of the Italian forces had escaped into Tunisia and Rommel was busy saving as many of his men as possible. Here and there during his non-stop retreat he had left behind pockets of men to fight a rearguard action to gain time to react his men into Tunisia. Rommel and his men did not have an easy way in their retreat. They were ceaselessly harassed by the R. A. F. with the result that they left behind volumes of materials, such as guns, transports and other armoured vehicles. Hitler did send powerful squadron of his *Luftwaffe* to assist Rommel, but the R. A. F. was more than a match for the German Eagles and drove them out of the sky. It was an unparalleled and unprecedented defeat the Germans had suffered and they could do nothing but swallow it. Dr. Goebells failed miserably in his efforts to conceal the gravity and seriousness of the defeat Rommel had suffered in Africa from the German people. In fact the Nazi leaders feared an increase in sabotage activities in the Home Front to follow the unceremonious retreat of Rommel and as a precaution they gave Himmler, the Gestapo Chief, unlimited powers to tighten the Home Front.

The double campaign in Libya as well as in North Africa was a great triumph for the United Nations. In the first place they had secured all the strategic positions along the whole coast in North Africa and with their control of Gibraltar and Malta they could always hold out a threat of invasion of Italy and Southern France. The double offensive in Africa compelled Hitler to keep a sufficiently large number of men and tanks in the West and hence the pressure on Russia was lessened to a great extent. This was of the greatest importance to the Russians as the new offensive coincided with the launching of the Russian winter offensive. Even Hitler had to admit that he had to detach a large number of planes from the East and send them on to Africa to help Rommel. The most important factor that resulted from the latest offensive was that it gave Russia confidence in the ability of Britain and America to strike at Hitler in the continent of Europe. She saw in the latest offensive in Africa the beginning of the Second Front, of which there had been so much talk. The lightning victory gained by the Eighth Army in Libya and by the combined forces of the British, French and American forces in French North Africa brought new hope to the peoples of all countries of the United Nations that the final victory in this war would be won by the Allies and in the end Hitler would be forced to capitulate and surrender all the countries he had enslaved. This Allied victory strengthened the morale of the Russians to such a great extent that they were able to launch their third winter offensive with unprecedented vigour and to hurl back the Nazis from many of their strong positions. They fought like men inspired with a fresh hope, and like men who had unwavering faith in the final outcome of this long hard and ferocious battle in which more than once they found their Fatherland threatened with complete destruction. The

greatest gain for the Allies as a result of the new offensive was that they could get the complete collaboration of France on their side. Though only the French in Africa were actively fighting on their side against Hitler, Metropolitan France was roused to the stark realities of the situation and she showed her whole hearted sympathy towards the Allies. The occupation of France by Hitler embittered the feelings of the French people throughout the world, and in France proper the bitterness occasioned by Nazi brutality threw the people on the brink of revolt. Activities of sabotage increased and the Frenchmen murdered German soldiers with impunity. The French men and women were just waiting for the Allied soldiers to land on the French soil to rise in revolt against their German masters. This change of heart on the part of France in favour of the Allies was the greatest asset to the United Nations, for when the time comes for the invasion of France by the Allied armies Hitler will find that he will have to cope with not only the invaders but also the civilians of the country who will sabotage the German war-effort.

Hitler need not be taken lightly. He must have foreseen all these possibilities and hence must have decided to reinforce his army in Tunisia with the resolute purpose of holding out in that part of the country against the Allies. If Hitler succeeds in keeping a foot-hold in Africa it is almost certain that he will leave no stone unturned in his attempt to thwart the invasion plan of the United Nations. And Hitler knows, as much as the leaders of the United Nations know, that without the invasion of the continent the Allies will not be able to win a victory over him. He is confident that even if he would encounter a major defeat in

Russia he would not be reduced in strength so much as not to be able to prevent the Russians from pouncing on the Balkans and Germany. Hence if he can prevent the invasion of the continent and prolong the war to the brink of exhaustion on both sides, then he will certainly get better terms at the Peace Conference. A complete defeat of the German Army will reduce Germany to the worst position that can be imagined. War guilt will be imposed on her and a treaty worse than that of *Versailles* will be thrust down her throat. On no account can Hitler afford a complete defeat. Hence his resoluteness in holding out in Tunisia is understandable.

At the time of writing the situation in North Africa continues to be a stalemate. Rommel and his men sufficiently reinforced by Hitler are threatening the Allied line in Tunisia. The Eighth Army has entered Tunisia from the south and is just outside the Merith Line. Neither side has developed an offensive spirit.

## TUNISIA FALLS

The second week of May, 1943 saw the combined forces of the United States, Great Britain and Fighting France occupying Tunis and Bizerta the last strongholds of the Axis forces in Africa. For three years bitter fighting has been going on in Africa and it required a Wavell, an Auchinleck, a Montgomery, a Cunningham, and at last an Alexander to drive that mighty German fighter, General Rommel, out of Tunisia. During the last three years the fortunes of war had smiled alternately at the Axis and the Allied forces, but the battle ended in an Allied victory. Rommel was a hard nut to crack and was more than a match for all the best British and American generals put together. His defeat

in Africa (Tunisia) was mainly due to the overwhelming superiority in numbers of the enemy forces for the Germans had more than once demonstrated during the course of the war that they are the best soldiers in the world. For three years they had driven waves after waves of British Imperial Troops out of Libya and once threatened to conquer Egypt and Suez. Though the British Troops bore the brunt of the battle in Libya they had to depend upon the active support of the forces of the United States and Fighting France to finally oust Rommel and his men from Africa. But for the assistance of the United States forces it would not have been possible for the British troops to win the battle in Africa.

The dangerous delay caused in the operations in Africa was not in the least due to the inferiority in equipment or numbers of the British and Imperial forces but mainly due to the tactics of Rommel. He could give as well as take a defeat and the lightning rapidity with which he recovered after every defeat threw the British troops off their guard and compelled them to take to their heels to the Egyptian frontier. The only weak spot in Rommel's armour was the Italians. He had either to drag them behind him or to goad them on from behind and the bulk of the Axis forces in Africa under Rommel was Italian. But for this weakness Rommel would have ruled supreme in the African battlefield. The Italians were not in the fight in all sincerity. They were plunged into the war by Mussolini and hence they fought half heartedly and showed readiness to surrender whenever they confronted the enemy. This explains why the British were able to bag more Italian than German prisoners.

All is well that ends well. Now that the forces of the United Nations have ousted the Germans and the Italians from Africa a bright future awaits them. They have floored the mightiest German General and the greatest general of this war and have freed the entire southern coast of the Mediterranean from the Axis menace either from the air the sea or land. With very heavy commitments in Russia Hitler will not be able to land forces in great strength in Africa. Besides, the strongly reinforced Allied bases in Africa will now be turned into invasion bases and the victory of the Desert-battle will be in readiness to land in Europe and carry the battle into Italy and Germany. With the Mediterranean once again free for Allied traffic with no major battle in Africa and with the forces of United States, Fighting French and the Imperial troops readily stationed at the African bases, the United Nations stand better chances of success in their attempt to invade Europe. But for the victory in Africa the invasion of Europe cannot be easy and it is doubtful whether any attempt at invasion can be visualised in the near future. It is in this respect the victory in Africa is important to the Allies. It has brought nearer the possibility of the invasion of Hitlerite Europe. It has spread the fear of invasion among the Axis forces and it has brought a ray of hope to the subjugated peoples of Europe. It has heartened Russia a great deal, for an invasion of Europe in the immediate future will take a great burden off her shoulders. She has been battling with all her might and with unabated fury against the mighty stream of Nazi hordes for the last two years and she needs assistance. By her magnanimous stand against the brutal onslaughts of the Nazis, Russia has saved Britain, or better say, has given her a longer lease of life and now it is Britain's turn

to rush to the assistance of Russia and lighten her burden by opening a Second Front.

Considering the strategic value of the North African bases and the importance attached to these bases in connection with the possible and probable invasion of Southern Europe it is in the fitness of things that the United Nations should celebrate Tunisian victory as one of the outstanding achievements of the Allied forces in this war. In comparison with the success that attended the Axis arms in Europe as well as in the Far East the victory in Africa as a whole does not give much credit to the war-ringing qualities of the United Nations; still however, the triumph in Africa beginning from the liquidation of Mussolini's Abyssinian Empire and culminating in the occupation of Tunisia signifies a remarkable recovery on the part of the United Nations. In the victory in Africa the United Nations have shown that they have the will and the means to carry on a long war and in spite of the severe and almost suicidal reverses suffered at the beginning they can fight the battle to a finish. They have also shown that by sheer weight of material and by husbanding the vast resources at their disposal to their war machine they can wage a war of attrition against Hitlerite Europe and in this war the victory will be theirs without the least shadow of doubt. The African victory is the first major success that came the way of the Allied Forces. Though British and Imperial troops contributed very greatly to the triumph in Africa, the assistance afforded by the American and Free French forces cannot be minimised. The landing of American troops in North Africa was the first sign of the approaching success. American success brought in its trail the active co-operation of all sections of the French people in Africa and this in turn deprived Hitler and Goebbels their Fifth Column

In that country American success in North Africa was more of a diplomatic defeat for Hitler than a military one. With North Africa out of his control Hitler could not use Vichy France as a pawn in the game of fomenting trouble in the African Continent

I will be failing in my duty if I do not join others in paying tributes to the valiant Indian soldiers who carried the day in the battle of Tunisia. In all the theatres of war in the African Continent the Indians fought with traditional bravery and their exploits in the battle field crowned their motherland with martial glory and thrilled their countrymen with a sense of pride. In Egypt, in Libya and in Tunisia the Indian divisions were in the front line and whenever a city fell to the Allies the Indian Battalions had the honour of entering the city first as victors. When Tunis the last Axis stronghold surrendered the Fourth Indian Division carried the torch of victory into the city. Now it is universally admitted that the Indian troops were entrusted with the hard task of launching the final assault on the formidable fortifications of Tunis and it was to the deadly fire from their guns the last remnants of Von Armin's forces yielded. It can rightly be said that the Indian soldiers have brought the Allied victory and the possibility of an invasion of Hitlerite Germany nearer by clearing the African coast of the last semblance of Axis military power. The valour of the Indian soldiers is justly and rightly acclaimed by the United Nations and there is a move to take these men to London and parade them before the British people as the victors of Tunisia. This and much more they deserve but I question the sincerity of this move.

The organising of a spectacular parade of Indian soldiers through the streets of London will go down to

history as another "Winston's Show", but it is dubious whether it can make any favourable impression in India. Such Churchillian methods may fool the Americans and other peoples of the Dominions into believing that despite Gandhi and the Congress, Indians are joining the British Fighting Forces in overwhelming numbers and that they are whole heartedly supporting Britain in this war. Such window dressing may help Britain in silencing public opinion in support of Indian Independence. A group of American news papers may be found to back up Churchill and his methods, but the reality will stare Britain in the face just at the end of the war, for the struggle for Indian Freedom will continue till India becomes a self-governing nation. There need be no mistaking the fact that the Congress, despite its short comings in the past, remains the most powerful political organization in this country and without its co-operation no constitution-making scheme, however dexterously planned, will succeed.

Much is said about the Tunisian victory. Mr. Churchill spoke with the adroitness of a journalist-politician, that he is, and said that the triumph of the United Nations in Tunisia will go down to history as a magnificent achievement. He said that in Tunisia alone the Germans lost 3,00,000 men killed and thousands wounded and taken prisoners, and such colossal losses weakened the enemy a great deal. He recognized the enormous sacrifice Russia has made in this war and said that after his conference with President Roosevelt he has definitely planned to lighten Russia's burden. He has also assured Australia and New Zealand that the war in the Pacific will be intensified. Mr. Churchill's speech was hailed in many quarters as making the Zero Hour of invasion, but it was unlike all his previous speeches. It was more otiose than usual and there was no sign of his usual bombast.

The speech was less aggressive than the one he delivered after the Casablanca meeting. He spoke of the grand offensive and at the same time would not let the people give free rein to their imagination. He was so glad about the success in meeting the U-boat menace but did not conceal the fact that the menace had still to be fought. This finicking, calm-like performance is very much unlike Mr. Churchill. But the very fact that he was so obviously trying to dam his inborn ebullience in spite of the very favourable turn of events was extremely significant. It warned all observers of the war situation against hoping too much and also against hoping it too early.

## FIRST STEP TO SECOND FRONT

Close on the heels of Tunisian victory the Allies began an air war on the Italian islands in the Mediterranean. The bombing of Southern Italy and Sicily had commenced much earlier but these were only occasional and isolated raids and could not be taken very seriously though they caused much damage to property and civilian life. The first attack which could be characterised as a prelude to invasion was launched on the islands of Lampedusa and Pantelleria, two small Italian islands south of Sicily. These islands were subjected to severe hammering from the air and shelling from the sea for days and an effective blockade of the islands was maintained. Before launching the land attack the Allied aircraft dropped pamphlets demanding surrender in order to spare unnecessary suffering, but the defenders of the islands did not pay much heed to the demands of the Allies. So a furious attack from the air and the sea was launched and after pulverising the islands' defences the Allied armies landed and surrounded the Italian garrison which eventually surrendered. Though these islands are very small they

furnish air and naval bases to bomb Sicily and Italy. The occupation of these islands was effected with very little loss to the Allies, while Italy lost thousands of men as prisoners of war. It is now believed that the Second Front has already been opened and the Allies have already started their march towards Rome and Berlin. From Pantellaria and Lampedusa to Sicily and Italy seems to be the invasion plan of the Allies, but the road to Rome and Berlin cannot be gained so easily. Hitler is already massing large forces for the defence of Italy and there is no ground to believe that he will yield without a tough fight. In spite of the recent Allied victory in Tunisia and the Mediterranean there is no sign of the war coming to an end early and there are no prospects of an early invasion of Europe by the Allies.

It is true that the ousting of the Axis forces from Africa and the occupation of the Mediterranean islands constitute the first step towards the invasion of Europe, but everything depends upon how quickly and effectively the Allies are going to use the present favourable opportunity to their advantage. There is no gainsaying the fact that the Allies have resources in men and materials to carry out their invasion of Europe through Italy, Greece, Norway and Belgium, but these operations will be certainly delayed as the Allies have no correct estimate of the Axis strength. Hitler, the master of the whole of Europe, can still hold the Allies at bay for a year or two to come unless he is confronted with a revolt at home to synchronize an Allied invasion. If you rule-out the possibility of revolt then the war is going to be a long and hard one.

### RUSSIAN RECOVERY

The recovery of Russia in the winter of 1942 is one of the miracles of this war. At the beginning of winter

Russia stood practically alone facing the gigantic onslaught of the Nazis. Stalingrad was fighting street by street, while Grozny oil-fields were almost within the tentacles of the German Octopus. Ukraine was completely lost and Caucasus was engaged in a death struggle. In the north and the central sectors the Germans were within striking distance of Moscow and Leningrad, but the defenders of these two cities held the Huns at bay. On the whole the situation was very critical and if Stalingrad had fallen Russia would have lost more than half the battle. The fall of Stalingrad would have hastened the fall of Moscow and Leningrad and then a peace dictated by German militarism would have been imposed upon Russia, but that is not to be. When winter had earnestly set in the Russians launched their big offensive. They first surrounded and then completely annihilated the German divisions trapped in the Stalingrad sector. The Germans were commanded by Hitler to take Stalingrad at any cost. The Germans fought valiantly to the last man but Stalingrad, instead of becoming a symbol of a great triumph for Hitler, became the graveyard of thousands of Germans. The defeat at Stalingrad was the first major defeat Hitler suffered in this war. And with the loss of Stalingrad the Germans began to retreat in the southern and central sectors. The Russians pressed home their victory and threw back the Germans to the shores of the Black Sea. The Nazis left the Caucasus and withdrew to Novorosisk. Half of Ukraine was lost to the Germans with the capture of Karkov by the advancing Russians. Though the Germans recaptured Karkov they could not advance further. With the close of winter a stalemate ensued at the Russian front. The Russians are still holding the positions they had gained during their winter offensive and besides they are striking the German positions from the air. The Russians have gained much in their air offensive; they have kept the

*Luftwaffe* busy and have struck mighty blows at the Nazi line and have destroyed great dumps of ammunition. The already battered lines of communication and transport will add greatly to the difficulty of reinforcing the German armies at the Russian front. But there are signs that the Germans are planning for a big offensive against Moscow. One remarkable feature at present is the failure of the Nazis to schedule their attacks. There will be no Spring or Summer offensive, no time tabling of victories, but only battles for defence. Hitler who has massed 190 German and 28 satellite divisions at the Russian front ought to have launched his grand offensive long ago. Yet for some unaccountable reasons he is not giving the world. Not merely that but a new line was recently adopted by Nazi propagandists that Germany had decided to remain on the defensive and to throw the burden of the initiative on the enemy. This may be a trap to throw the Russians off their guard, for the massing of 70 divisions in the central sector alone cannot be for mere defensive purposes.

The Tunisian victory seems to have upset Hitler's plans. The fear of an Allied invasion from the south and west is certainly staying Hitler's hand. He must be calculating the inevitable losses he will have to suffer in case a successful invasion of Europe by the British and American forces coincides with a large scale Russian offensive. The preservation of Germany is of foremost importance to Hitler and there need not be any shadow of doubt that Hitler will surrender before waging the mightiest and fiercest battle in the history of mankind. His chief concern at present must be the planning of a defensive line in the west and south, and an offensive in the east. He is conscious that he is facing the combined strength of Britain, America and Russia and any false step in his plans will cost him

Germany. He is calculating which of the conquered countries he can easily sacrifice in the defence of Germany.

It seems certain that Italy is left to the defence of the Fascist armies, while Norway is allowed to shift for herself. It is impossible for Hitler to defend the whole of Europe against an external invasion and internal revolt. He is really in a dilemma, and hence it is little surprise if his grand offensive has not yet started. He cannot afford to wait indefinitely, soon he will have to take the plunge and then will start the fiercest of conflagrations in history for this time Hitler will be fighting his last battle whether for good or bad.

### SIDE LIGHTS

At the time of writing a calm prevails on all fronts. Both sides are making huge preparations for the coming storm. The Allies continue bombing of Sicily and Sardinia with a view to make these islands stepping-stones for the invasion of Italy. They are massing invasion troops in the African ports and are constantly informing the peoples of France and other occupied countries of Europe to be ready to welcome the invading troops. Hitler on his part has massed his Panzer divisions along the South Coast of France and is ready to meet an Allied invasion of the Continent. For the last one month the Allies have been carrying on a war of nerves against the Axis and this has greatly damped the morale of the German and Italian civilians. The fear of a successful invasion of their home lands by the Allies has to some extent shaken the resolution of the Axis troops and even the Axis generals appear to be perplexed. The Allied propaganda has kept Hitler guessing as to when and where the Allied offensive will start and nothing but the uncertainty of the situation has prevented him from launching his grand offensive against Russia.

In the Russian front there are signs of occasional thrusts at some points, but these are only feelers and no major offensive can be expected in the near future. The Germans seem to be determined to carry on a defensive battle leaving the initiative to the Russians, and there is no reason why the Russians should take the initiative before the next winter or before the Allied invasion of the Continent starts in earnest.

There is feverish activity in India. American, Australian and British troops are pouring into India in thousands and talks of the coming offensive against Burma are afloat in the air. The termination of the battle in Africa has made available large number of troops and huge quantity of war materials for other theatres of war and it seems that the British and American leaders are resolved to pay their close attention to the Japs. The loss of Burma and the East Indies contributed greatly to the economic crisis in India and unless Burma is recaptured the food-crisis in India which has already assumed dangerous proportions cannot be overcome. And so long as the Japs hold the Pacific islands the threat to Australia and New Zealand will remain. To allow Japs more time will only help them to fortify and consolidate their gains and to finally launch an offensive against the Allied positions. The Japs have immensely profited by the lull in the Far East and even at this stage it requires a tremendous effort on the part of the United Nations to oust them from their almost secure bases in the Pacific.

The uncomfortable position in the Far East must have been a thorn in the side of the British considering their responsibility for the defence of India. The political deadlock in India adds to the gravity of the situation. And the failure of the British Government to solve the

Indian question has found resentment among the American people. With a large number of American and British troops in India it is natural that the United Nations will desire the whole-hearted support of the Indian people in the conduct of their coming offensive against the Japs. The previous attempts of the British Government to tackle the Indian problem resulted in the launching of a violent sabotage campaign by the people of India in the name of the Congress Party. The Government put down the campaign by horrible repression but it is doubtful whether they have gained anything more than driving the movement underground. Anyway the Government seem to be satisfied. They think that they can carry on without the moral support of the people of India. They seem to be determined to enforce a military Raj if any further attempt at installing a puppet National Government fails. This explains the appointment of Field-Marshal Wavell as the next Viceroy of India.

The appointment of Field Marshal Lord Wavell as the Viceroy of India was welcomed by the American and British Press but in India there was resentment. The Americans have good reasons to feel happy to find the foremost British General turned a civilian overnight. During the First World War the American Generals found the pin pricks of their British and French colleagues intolerable and it seems that they are having their revenge. The American troops must not have agreed to fight under the command of British Generals and a soldier of Wavell's standing cannot be expected to be second in command. By removing Field Marshal Wavell from the military rank Mr. Churchill has made room for General Stilwell, the American. A student of war will realise that Field Marshal Wavell was to be given the East Asia Command,

This was exactly the appointment to which he was sped with a flourish of trumpets when the Japs erupted like a volcano over Malaya. The command dissolved itself when the all-conquering Japs reached the frontiers of India. But now when the new offensive against the Japs begins Wavell will have become the Viceroy of India and Stilwell will step into his shoes as the chief of the East Asia Command.

In this war the Americans have ousted the British from the field of command in all theatres of war and the British realising their weakness have meekly submitted. In the African front the American General Eisenhower held the command; in the South Pacific another American General Macarthur is supreme; the Second Front Command will certainly be given to the American Chief-of-Staff, General Marshall and in the Far East General Stilwell will step in place of Field Marshal Wavell. Thus in future the war strategy will be directed by Americans, of course in consultation with the British. Hence there is little surprise if the American Press expresses its entire satisfaction at the appointment of Wavell as the Viceroy of India.

The Britishers are also happy. Mr. Churchill has found a strong man to take the reins of Government in India. In view of the embarrassing situation caused by the C. D. movement last year, Mr. Churchill is determined to prevent the repetition of the same and as a precautionary measure he has installed a military strategist at the head of the Government. In view of the coming offensive against the Japs from India this appointment will certainly help the speeding up of India's war-effort. A soldier-vice-roy will be a great success in the matter of devising plans for the defence of the country, but how far

will he succeed in enlisting the sympathy of the Gandhi-group which is opposed to all wars in a matter of speculation. Is it possible that Lord Wavell will succeed where other better statesmen have failed? To me it appears that Mr. Churchill is not very serious about solving the political deadlock in India. He wants Wavell to rule India and make her the largest base for operations against the Japs. When Wavell comes to India in October to take charge of the reins of Government, the offensive against the Japs will have started and the in-coming Viceroy will devote all his attention to the pooling of the resources of this country to assist the operations against the enemy and the political problem will be shelved for the time being under the exigency of war. Lord Wavell certainly cannot work wonders even if he wills. Mr. Churchill who does not care for the moral support of India directs the policy of administration and Lord Wavell will implicitly carry out the orders of his master. There is no shadow of doubt that the Indians will have to wait till the end of war or perhaps a pretty long time afterwards, to have their voice heard. The only other alternative is to join hands with Lord Wavell in promoting India's war effort. No suggestion for the withdrawal of foreign troops or for granting of responsible self-government will be listened to and any further attempt to organize a sabotage campaign will be put down with an iron hand and all atrocities the foreign troops may be called upon to commit under the pretext of restoring law and order will be justified under the clause "all is fair in love and war."

The responsibility for solving the political deadlock in India rests with the United Nations, particularly Britain. India is an acid test of American and British war-aims. If Britain, with the connivance of America,

keeps India in bondage even after the war, the West will forfeit the sympathy of the East and the time will not be long before all the Asiatic peoples unite to overthrow their western oppressors. In the interest of the peace of the world it is the fundamental duty of the United Nations to create confidence among the Asiatic peoples regarding their intentions in establishing a New World Order, which will guarantee freedom for all, after the war. And for this purpose a beginning made in India will beget universal acclamation.

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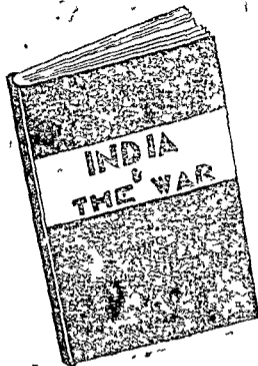
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Vol. IV.

BY

*H. R. Aiyer*

C. S. Raja & Co.

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TRIVANDRUM

First Published August 1945

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Printed at the A. R. V. Press, Trivandrum  
and Published by C. S. Raja & Co. Srivarabam Street,  
Trivandrum.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
Italian Collapse . . . . .	1
Soviet Summer Offensive . . . . .	4
1944 . . . . .	7
Invasion of Europe . . . . .	12
Balkan Collapse . . . . .	16
Colossal Collapse . . . . .	18
Germany Invaded . . . . .	21
Allies Invade Greece . . . . .	24
The last Russian Offensive . . . . .	28
1945 . . . . .	31
Yalta . . . . .	33
Battle of the Rhine . . . . .	44
Battle of Berlin . . . . .	48
Germany Surrenders . . . . .	51



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# HITLER'S WAR

(PART VII)

## ITALIAN COLLAPSE

With the Allied victory in Tunisia armed conflict in the African theatre came to a close. With Africa cleared of the Axis forces, the Allies prepared to move on what the Nazis described as "fortress Europe." Across the narrows American, British and Canadian troops landed on the Sicilian beaches at dawn on July 10, 1943 in one of the largest amphibious operations in military history. Bombing of Sicilian towns and the invasion of Lampedusa and Pantelleria two Italian islands south of Sicily preceded the invasion of Sicily. But the landing on the Sicilian beaches heralded the opening on the Second Front.

The first 48 hours of the landings were decisive. Once the Allies had proved they could assault Sicily from the sea the rest of the 38 day Sicilian campaign was gruelling enough but its result was never in doubt and its gains were far more than territorial. As the first Allied land penetration of Fascist home territory, it resulted in the collapse of Fascism, and all but knocked Italy out of the war.

Much of the fighting in Sicily was done by the Germans. The Italian forces showed readiness to surrender to the Allies. Allied success in Sicily kindled the spirit of revolt in the hearts of the Italian people. There were signs throughout Italy that the civilians as well as the Italian armed forces would fall upon the Germans the

moment the Allies landed on the mainland. The King of Italy felt that the time had arrived for the overthrow of Mussolini and he acted boldly. The Germans, anticipating a sudden invasion of Italy by the Allies, were pouring into Italy through the Brenner Pass. Hitler had decided to place Italy under full German occupation, and was accordingly sending many divisions through the Brenner Pass. But King Emmanuel was a bit quicker. On July 25 he commanded Benito Mussolini to resign his Premiership and appointed General Badoglio to be Premier of a new Italian Government which was prepared to join the Allies in the war against Germany as soon as the Allies landed in Italy. Thus came about Mussolini's ignoble fall and the end of Italian Fascism.

Marshal Badoglio declared grandiloquently on the assumption of office that the war would go on and that the sacred commitments to the Axis ally would be observed faithfully. Feverish conferences were held at Rome between German Generals and the new Italian Government to revise the Axis strategy and the facade of unity and belligerency was preserved for the time being. Berlin and Tokyo promptly rallied from their first consternation over the fall of Mussolini and sagaciously observed that the change of Government was merely the domestic concern of Italy. It made no change in the solidarity of the Axis, nor would it affect the future of the war. The war would go on.

Hitler knew the true meaning of Mussolini's fall. It meant the cracking of the Axis and the beginning of his own fall. The fall of Mussolini let loose the anti Fascist forces in Italy and this would help the Allies to overthrow the new Italian Government. Marshal Badoglio was not as staunch a Fascist as the *Duce* and hence could

not be relied upon. Hitler knew that he should fight alone and he made preparations to defend Germany. The Germans occupied the territories north of the river Po and were advancing towards Rome. The writ of Marshal Badoglio did not run north of Po. In the south he had a difficult time to quell the revolt of anti-Fascist forces. He was heading for a fall and it came on September 3, the day on which Allied forces landed on the Italian mainland.

It is obvious that King Emmanuel clearly foresaw the inevitable collapse and cleverly staged the show in order to save Italy from falling into the hands of the Nazis. His purpose was to throw dust into the eyes of the Germans and to allow the forces of General Eisenhower to have a firm foothold on the Fortress of Europe.

The sudden and unexpected capitulation of the Badoglio Government came as a shock to Hitler. His forces, especially in the southern and central Italy were placed in a difficult position because of the simultaneous landing of the Allied forces at various points. Not only was the retreat of his forces cut off in many cases, but they were at once faced with a hostile Italian army and hostile Italian population. Hitler made the best of a bad bargain. As soon as capitulation became known, he seized most of the principal towns north of the River Po and established a military Headquarters with General Kesserling in charge. River Po formed the main defence line.

In central Italy Hitler was able to seize Rome and rescue Mussolini from that city. Now he established a Fascist Italian Government in North Italy with Mussolini at its head and conducted the war upon the Italian people.

ler was able to snatch an advantage though a temporary one, out of the situation that arose immediately after the capitulation, because of the vacillating pro fascist policy pursued by the Badoglio Government in the six weeks that passed between Mussolini's fall and the Armistice. During this period the Badoglio Government only made a show of suppressing Fascism and the Fascist Party. In reality they allowed all Fascist criminals to go about their nefarious business quite freely. They curbed the anti fascist popular movement and did not allow it to grow into a powerful united anti Hitler mass force. The result was that Fascist traitors sitting in Badoglio's administration were able openly to plot for the come back of fascist tyranny. This is how Mussolini's rescue became possible.

It was not accidental that Italy laid down arms at the time when the Red Army victoriously entered the Donbas, when the mass expulsion of the German occupants from Russia was proceeding, and when every day the battle brought new defeats on the Nazi armies. The Red Army's summer offensive with its gigantic reverses and losses inflicted upon the German Army accelerated the crisis in Italy and brought about the Italian capitulation. Marshal Badoglio surrendered to the Allies because he knew that he could not expect any help from Germany whose forces were locked up on the Soviet Front. Neither could he rely upon his own armed forces. Therefore Marshal Badoglio bowed to the inevitable and surrendered. Italian collapse started the beginning of the end of Axis domination in Europe.

### SOVIET SUMMER OFFENSIVE

The struggle of the giants in Russia entered a new phase with the great victory of Stalingrad in February.

1943. At the peak of their successes the Germans had overrun about 700,000 square miles of western Russia, including much of the Soviet's most fertile farmlands, richest mineral areas and modern industrial regions. In their winter offensive of 1942-43 which produced the victory of Stalingrad, the Russians regained between 185,000 and 200,000 square miles; and in their summer offensive of 1943 they were to conquer another 138,000 square miles.

The summer campaign was opened on July 5 with a massive German thrust toward Kursk from Orsk and Brylgorod hitting north and south respectively. Its fate was indicative of the Russians' remarkable success in solving the problem of German tactics.

A week after the German offensive began, the Russians themselves went over to the offensive, and by July 23 they had retaken all the ground they had lost. By August 5, just a month after the Germans had struck, the Russians had cracked the defences of Orsk and Brylgorod and occupied both the key positions. The Russian offensive broke through the German defences and captured Kharkov on August 23, 1943.

Another offensive was launched against Smolensk. It fell to the Russians on September 25. Far to the south Novorossiisk had fallen on September 16, and the last Germans were cleared out of the Caucasus when the Taman peninsula was freed. The main German forces were then attempting to make a stand along the Dnieper bend. The Russians forced a crossing to capture the industrial centre of the Dnipropetrovsk, and early in November they cut off the Germans in the Crimea and gained the east bank of the Dnieper everywhere.

The Germans made a gigantic effort to hold Crimea. The German High Command had placed large forces along the Sea of Azov and the Crimea at the risk of being cut off. This attitude of the Germans seemed puzzling when viewed with the rapid advance the Russians were making in the direction of the Sea of Azov. The supreme strategic as well as political importance of Crimea compelled the Germans to make a firm stand there. The Germans must hold on to the Crimea if they want to head off the dreaded landslide in the Balkans which is sure to happen as soon as the Russian army will advance in that direction. The recovery of Sevastepol will bring the western shores of the Black Sea within the operational zone of the Soviet Fleet. The Rumanian oilfields will come within the reach of the Soviet air arm operating from the Crimean aerodromes. With the Black Sea under the control of the Soviet Fleet and given the necessary air protection it should be easy to land troops at the Bulgarian ports of Burgas and Varna. The Bulgarian Government had already announced their decision to welcome the Russians. In such a possible situation Rumania also will cease to be a reliable Nazi satellite. So if the Germans lose the Crimea, by the time they will try to take up a stand on the Dnieper line the Red Army will appear in their rear through the Balkans. The possibility of this grave danger—of losing the war in the winter of 1943—compelled the German High Command to continue the extremely costly defence of the Lower Dnieper line. But Russia's victorious summer offensive which passed into the winter offensive foiled the German plan and cut off the Germans in Crimea. This was a fatal blow to the Germans and it decided the victory of the Russians along the entire front from Crimea to Leningrad.

## 1944

The year 1944 opened with great prospects of victory for the Allies. The Soviet winter offensive that followed on the heels of the summer offensive liquidated German opposition in the Ukraine and liberated the whole of South Russia from the Nazis. The Russian armies in the southern front stood poised for a large scale offensive in the Balkans. In the northern sector a new Soviet offensive fell with crushing force on the long German salient that reached up to the outskirts of Leningrad. This offensive lifted the two years long siege of Leningrad.

After the Germans were defeated at the gates of Moscow, Hitler consoled them by holding out the greater prize, the city of Lenin. He declared that his legions could take Leningrad by storm, but he preferred to starve it into submission. He did his best. For nearly a year and half, until one railway line running eastwards to Vologda was opened, the great city was completely isolated from the rest of the country. The story of heroism and unimaginable sacrifices of the defenders of Leningrad remains to be told. But none can deny that the defenders of Leningrad fought one of the epic battles of this war.

Within two weeks of the launching of the new offensive the Red Army smashed the formidable ring of steel and cement which the Germans had built around the city during more than two years. The defeated German Army about 300,000 strong was encircled. The German forces were partly captured and annihilated and partly driven into the Baltic States which were invaded by Russia  
 'fore long.

The powerful attack on the Baltic front after the great victory of Leningrad pinned down the German strategic reserves in Poland. Consequently the German commander Manstein could not get reinforcements even after his army had been depleted and exhausted in the hard battles of the Dnieper bend. The Germans had planned to make their stand at the Dnieper bend, but their plans were thwarted by the three-pronged Russian offensive. Zhukov's army smashed the Odessa — Lwow railway on which Manstein's army was receiving its supplies, if not reinforcements and Marshal Kotek's army delivered a frontal attack on the centre of Manstein's line. Consequently the line was split into two making any further organised resistance impossible. Manstein had no other alternative but to retire not only behind the Dnieper line but on the other side of the Carpathians and Transylvanian Alps. The Russians seemed to have planned the whole campaign to the minutest detail just like a game of chess. The last moves of the enemy were actually forced.

By the middle of March 1944 the situation at the Russian front was most critical for the Germans. The Germans were driven out of the Russian soil and the Soviet armies stood at the pre-war Polish frontier, ready to invade the Baltic States in the north, Poland in the centre and the Balkans in the south. Germans had lost the war in the eastern front and were confronted with the situation of defending their Fatherland against a Polish invasion. To make the best of a bad bargain Hitler occupied Rumania and Hungary to forestall a Russian invasion of these countries.

The chances were against Hitler. The defeated and demoralised troops of Manstein could not be expected to

fight any great battle. But the Rumanian and Hungarian armies could not be relied upon to fight Hitler's battles. And the defence of Germany could not be accomplished without Rumanian oil. And the shortest road to Rumania lay through Hungary on whose border the Red troops under the command of Zhukov had appeared. Therefore Hitler decided upon the occupation of Rumania and Hungary first to protect Rumanian oil and second to defend Germany in the Balkans.

Events were moving rather slowly on the Italian front. Since the invasion of the Italian mainland six months ago the Allied armies were making but little progress. The strategic plan of the Allied North African Command was to reach Rome before turning to other directions. The road to Rome was defended by the Germans in the south. The wisdom of the Allied plan was doubted. Nevertheless the underlying idea was that the political background of the military situation should be cleared before the latter could be regarded as definitely stabilised.

In Southern Italy, occupied by the Allies, there existed two civil authorities. One was the Committee of Liberation at Bari, and the other was the vibrant Government of Badoglio. There was a fierce conflict between the two. The former demanded the immediate abdication of the King, and the establishment of a Government of National Liberation supported by all the parties. All reports showed that that was the demand of the Italian people, not only in the South but also in the parts still occupied by the Germans. The discredited King seemed to have reconciled to the fate. Badoglio had agreed to the King's abdication in principle but insisted that it should be done in Rome. The Allied North African Headquarters

seemed to favour this view. It was a matter of prestige and the liberation of Rome would be a great moral victory for the cause of the United Nations.

Encouraged by the slow progress of the Allied forces - Kesselring the German Commander in Italy despatched all available reserves southwards evidently with the purpose of mounting a powerful counter offensive. It appeared that his plan was to take a stand along the so called Gustav Line running across the Peninsula about 75 miles south of Rome. If the Germans could stabilise that front there they would threaten the flank of any Allied operation across the Adriatic. That danger would be reinforced by naval bases at the head of the Adriatic still held by the Axis Powers. Presumably for this consideration Allied occupation of Rome was believed to be of decisive importance.

Taking advantage of the fact that the defence of the neighborhood of Rome had been depleted by Kesselring despatching three crack divisions to the South the Allied Command carried out a daring amphibious operation. On January 23rd, Allied forces effected landing at a point between the town of Nettuno and the Tiber estuary only 32 miles south of Rome. Evidently, the landing had been planned well ahead of a time as a counter move to Kesselring's imminent counter-offensive from the Gustav Line. The point of landing was admirably chosen. The Allied forces had the fullest advantage of the human element of surprise so important in such daring operations. For eight hours there was practically no opposition from the Germans. That enabled the land troops to establish a sufficiently large beach head which was enlarged swiftly. Thus a new Allied front was established only eight miles

from the Appian Way, the main coastal road to Rome, along which supplies were sent to the Gustav Line.

Kesselring was quick to realise the danger from the new direction. He had only 15 divisions with which it was impossible to hold two fronts. He knew that the Allied landings had upset his plans for the counter-offensive in the south. Nevertheless he kept up strong counter-attacks on the main southern front, taking care to withdraw as many divisions as possible. This strategy helped him in crippling the Allied forces before a general withdrawal northwards. When the general withdrawal came a month later the German defences around Rome was so strong that it took the Allies full six months to advance a distance of 32 miles.

Preparations for the invasion of Europe from the West were hurried up and the pounding of Germany and occupied Europe was steadily maintained. Since Battle of Berlin began in November 1943 many major assaults were made and thousands of tons of bombs were dropped on military and industrial targets. The air Blitz on Berlin had a crippling effect on Germany's war effort which told upon the efficiency of the German air-power. One of the chief factors that contributed to the sweeping successes of the Soviet armies in the summer and winter 1943 was the secondary part the *Luftwaffe* played. During the earlier days of German victory the *Luftwaffe* led the assault on all fronts. But the continuous bombing of industrial targets in Germany and Axis occupied Europe crippled the German air force.

In short, 1944 proved to be the turning point of the war in favour of the United Nations. Though many

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major battles still remained to be fought, 1944 started the beginning of the end of Hitler's domination of Europe

## INVASION OF EUROPE

The Allied invasion of Europe has been said to be the greatest military undertaking in the history of the world. For years the Allies had prepared for the onslaught on Hitler's Europe on the Western Front of Germany. Nothing was spared in the attempt to organise the invasion armada. Germany, too, it was reported had been preparing feverishly on what is called the Atlantic Wall to make an impregnable fortress to resist the invasion threat. Now for one full year the world awaited the opening of the Second Front in Europe. The invasion of Italy was considered the opening of the Second Front in some quarters. Theoretically it is possible to concede this opinion but for all practical purposes the Second Front was opened with the invasion of France.

The inevitable delay for the assault on Hitler's fortress had even caused a lot of anxieties among the people of the Allied nations who believed that the attack on the Western Front would speed the conclusion of the war. The long awaited invasion began in the early hours of the 6th of June, 1944. The entire world awaited with breathless anxiety the news about the invasion. The Germans on their part had put forward fantastic stories about the invulnerability of the Atlantic Wall, and the great defences all over the western coast of Europe. Taking into consideration the thoroughness, organisational capacity, scientific talent and the military traditions of the Germans the Allies devoted all their energies to the perfection of their invasion plans and every arrangement for its successful execution was made. Even the possible casualties of the

Invasion were calculated in advance. Human ingenuity, skill and labour have not been spared in the Allied preparations for the invasion.

The grandiose invasion armada attacked Hitler's fortress at several points on the Normandy coast and succeeded in breaking through the defence and getting a foothold on French soil. In about seven days the Allied invasion army made considerable progress extending their bridgeheads and occupying an area of about 500 square miles. The landing itself was effected in the face of strong German resistance. But there is this difference. The *Luftwaffe* was no match for the R. A. F. The Allies began the invasion with an aircover of 11,000 planes, while only a very small force of German planes appeared in a fighting mood. This air supremacy of the Allies decided the outcome of the greatest of military undertakings of the war. Besides, the Allies had large reserves in planes and they also continued their bombing of German and French lines behind the defence line.

The Germans were at a disadvantage since they had to defend a long coast-line without a powerful navy in the face of the combined naval strength of Great Britain and United States. The Germans contested every inch of land on which the Allies advanced and the fighting had been arduous.

Though the progress of the Allied advance in Northern France was very slow, the invasion itself had a salutary effect in other fronts. The liberation of Rome was effected just two days before the invasion of France, and since the fall of Rome, General Alexander's Army, continued to push back the Germans. And Kesselring had to give up his plan of counter attack in the south and had

to concentrate to hold a line north of Rome. The fall of Rome to the Allies, was more of a moral victory than a military one. It was a political and ideological triumph, for it signified the defeat of Fascism and it was the first major blow for Hitlerism. And the liberation of Rome made it possible to establish a provisional Italian Government.

At the Russian front things moved according to plan. After the liberation of Leningrad in February, the Finns got proposals by which they could get out of the war. After very serious discussion the Finns finally rejected the terms on March 20. Now during the period of negotiations, a lull had come into Russian operations against Finland. This lull continued until June 10 when the Red Army again began their full scale attack on Finland driving forward on the Karelian Isthmus. The offensive against Finland continued for more than a month, but ended in a Russian victory. While the Finnish Army sustained a major defeat in the field there occurred a change of Government. The Finns were tired of the war and revolted against the pro-German Government, and demanded that Finland should sign an Armistice. The pressure of public opinion and the defeat at the battle front decided the leaders to sue for peace. On August 17, President Mannerheim, informed Field Marshal Keitel that Finland no longer considered herself bound by former President Ryttö's agreement with Germany and offered to come to terms. On August 27 the Finnish Minister in Stockholm handed the Soviet Minister there a request that an armistice delegation be received. Thus ended the war against Finland. The fall of Finland removed any German threat to Leningrad from the Baltic Sea and also placed the German Fleet in the Baltic in a disadvantageous position.

On August 15 the Allies made new landing in the south of France. Allied invasion of French Mediterranean coast was not unexpected. Mr Churchill's sudden arrival in Italy after the fall of Rome gave an indication that something unusual was afoot. Severe bombing of the South coast of France and General Eisenhower's call to the French underground army to strike at the enemy synchronised with Mr Churchill's arrival in Italy. The British Premier must have previous knowledge of the time decided upon for the new landing and his visit to Italy must have been paid for political and propaganda purposes. Anyhow the Allied invasion of Southern France had a double object. It would strike towards a large part of the country where the Germans were not likely to be in great strength and it would afford a magnificent opportunity for the French patriot forces to rise against their Nazi overlords.

The Allied invasion of Southern France was clearly part of a grand strategical plan to drive the Nazi forces out of occupied Europe back to German frontier. It was linked up with General Eisenhower's invasion of Normandy and Brittany. It was also designed to co-operate with General Alexander's army in Italy since a breach by General Alexander of the Gothic Line north of the river Arno would bring him on to the coast leading to French Riviera.

Mr Churchill's visit to Italy had one great significant purpose. He went there to contact Marshal Tito and discuss with him the prospect of launching an Allied offensive in the Balkans. The Allies had planned to make a landing in Yugoslavia and Greece and it was essential to gauge the measure of co-operation the Yugoslav army could give to the invading troops. In fact a new Allied

front had actually been opened in the Balkans. The Yugoslav army of liberation under Marshal Tito had been counted as an integral part of the United Nations' arms and Marshal Tito had been given the rank of an Allied Commander. The Yugoslav army of liberation had won victory after victory against the superior German forces and at the time of the Allied invasion of Italy commanded a long stretch of the Eastern Adriatic coast. Practically the whole of Bosnia had been cleared of the Germans.

## BALKAN COLLAPSE

The dramatic developments in the west were largely responsible for the sudden decision of Rumania to desert Germany and join the Allies and of Bulgaria to seek means of getting out of the war. For some time past Russians were contemplating an offensive in the Balkans. On August 20 when two Soviet armies drove into Rumanian territory the storm broke in the Balkans. Hardly had the Soviet armies smashed through the deeply staggered enemy defences round Jassy and the lower reaches of the Dniester when a revolution occurred in Bucharest. The Liberal elements in the country convinced of an Allied victory overthrew the pro Axis dictatorship of Marshal Antonescu who was arrested. A broadcast by young King Michael announced that Rumania had accepted the Allies' peace terms and would take her place by the side of the Allies. So sudden was the Rumanian *coup d'état* that the Allies had no information about it except from the King's broadcast, but Moscow immediately stated that if the new Rumanian Government ceased hostilities against the United Nations, attacked Hungary to recover Transylvania and cleared the Germans out of the country, Rumania's independence would be guaranteed.

Immediately after the overthrow of Marshal Antonescu the Germans made an effort to seize Bucharest and set up another puppet administration, but their attempt was foiled by the Rumanians. The Russians benefiting by Rumania's *volte face*, proceeded to roll up Hitler's Balkan front. The unfortunate Germans, deserted and in some cases attacked by their former allies, simply withered away. Sweeping into the Galatz gap, the armies of Generals Malinovsky and Tolbukhin made a triumphal procession along the Danube valley to Bucharest, the Rumanian capital, crushing what remained of German opposition *en route*. They captured the whole of the Ploesti oil-fields, which in 1943 supplied the Nazis with three million tons of oil. Russian troops also landed at Constantza, the Rumanian port and the only naval base left to the enemy on the Black Sea.

On August 31 Soviet troops entered Bucharest, while another Army composite with the Rumanians, pushed through the Carpathians towards the Hungarian plains. Russian troops after the seizure of the Rumanian capital, pressed onwards along the Danube valley to reach the Yugoslav frontier at Turnu Severin, near the famous Iron Gates where the Danube cuts through the hills. By this move Bulgaria was completely cut off from Rumania.

Now Marshal Stalin declared war on the Bulgarians for continuing to assist the Nazis. The Bulgarian Government realising their hopeless position, sought an armistice with the Russians, which was granted, and declared war on Germany. Thus two of Hitler's former allies in Balkans turned against him.

The fall of Rumania and Bulgaria jeopardised the position of the German troops in Greece, Yugoslavia and

on islands in the Aegean including Crete and the Dodecanese. Now the chances for a successful invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia was assured. In short the fall of Rumania and Bulgaria started the collapse of the Balkans.

Meanwhile the Russian offensive in the north and the centre sectors grew intensive. The northern armies entered the Baltic States of Latvia and Lithuania and headed for East Prussia. Marshal Rokossovsky's army in the central sector made for Warsaw. Realising that the immediate danger to East Prussia was likely to develop along the railway to Koenigsberg through the Lusterburg gap the Germans started a strong counter offensive in this region. This offensive was described as the Nazis' most ambitious attempt yet to regain the initiative on the Russian front. But the Russians were not shaken by the German *panzer* thrust, which was defeated by Russian artillery. After a week of severe fighting the Russians entered East Prussia. Though the progress had been slow the invasion of East Prussia had begun. In the central sector the Russian army stood at the gates of Warsaw and in the south the Red Army and the Rumanian Army had crossed into Hungary through Rumania. Thus the Russian summer offensive achieved the gigantic task of driving the Nazis out of the Russian soil as well as smashing the Balkan front thereby paving the way for the liberation of Greece and Yugoslavia.

## COLOSSAL COLLAPSE

The first few weeks of campaigning in western Europe did not bring spectacular victories to the Allied arms. Apart from the successive landings on the French coast, the progress of the Allies had been slow. Germans were stubbornly resisting and were partly successful in

stemming the advance of the Allies. Once the landing was successfully made the Allied commanders decided to get sufficient reinforcements before launching any large scale offensive. Their first task was to gain a strong foothold on French soil and this took nearly a month. With the arrival of strong reinforcements the battle began in earnest and the Germans began to withdraw. The month of August witnessed the collapse of the Germans defending France. After having fought for more than a month the Germans found themselves pushed back by the superior strength of the Allies. And the situation was altered so drastically and suddenly that the Germans failed to establish a new line of defence before they took shelter behind the Siegfried Line.

The reason for the sudden collapse of the Germans on the western Front was the "definite, complete and decisive victory" won by the Allies over the German Seventh Army. Hitler entrusted the defence of France under von Rundstedt and later Von Kluge to three armies—the Seventh Army in Normandy, the Fifteenth Army in Pas de Calais and the Nineteenth Army in the south. Of these the Seventh Army was by far the strongest; it was estimated to comprise 27 divisions. The Fifteenth Army was considerably weaker, while the Nineteenth Army was reckoned to consist of about 100,000 men covering a huge area, a fact which explains the feeble opposition it put up against the Allied landings on the Cote d'Azur. It will thus be seen that Hitler depended chiefly on the Seventh Army to defeat the Allied invasion of Northern France and when it failed him France was bound to go

A close study of the progress of fighting in the western Front will reveal that the Germans collapsed because of

Hitler's policy of clinging for political and prestige reasons to impossible positions. This policy proved ruinous to the *Wehrmacht* both east and west. Hitler had commanded his officers to hold on to Normandy and the commander of the Seventh Army, General Hausser, fought till he was wounded and nearly captured. Now the Seventh Army was in no condition to continue fighting as it had suffered a loss of 500 000 men.

Meanwhile General Patton's Third U S Army tank columns achieved marvels round and south of Paris. The approach of these forces to the French capital so stimulated the local Men of the Maquis that they seized Paris from the palsied hands of the German garrison after some bitter battles. The fall of Paris was a signal for a revolt which spread throughout the country. The local patriots liberated many French cities, including Marseilles and Bordeaux. The defeat of the Seventh Army and the liberation of Paris started the big sweep of the Allied forces along the entire western front, and within a week of the commencement of this new drive the Allied forces reached the Siegfried Line.

The fifth anniversary of the outbreak of war found the campaign which led to the downfall of France being enacted in reverse. Allied armoured spearheads raced through northern France towards Belgium Luxembourg and Germany, at a speed far greater than that of the German performance of 1940. One of the most amazing advances of the Allied armies was effected by General Dempsey's British Second Army which took only six days to race from the river Seine to Brussels and Antwerp, the new Cromwell tanks clearing the way at 35 miles a day. In that brief period they traversed the ground over which

the last war raged for four years. There was complete co-ordination of the Allied armies engaged in the liberation of France and this resulted in simultaneous advances along the entire front. By the middle of September the Armies of General Eisenhower reached the German border and the Siegfried Line along a huge front from Antwerp to Belfort gap on the Swiss frontier. Thus the fifth anniversary of the war witnessed the colossal collapse of Hitler's "Western Wall."

## GERMANY INVADED

Goering often boasted that not a single Allied aeroplane would be allowed to cross the German frontier. That boast was effectively exploded by the R. A. F. which, after it recovered from the Battle of Britain, proceeded to carry the war into enemy territory with increasingly disastrous results. At different times after the fall of France, Hitler, Goering and Goebbels all proclaimed that the so-called sacred soil of the Fatherland would never be touched by an invader's foot. This boast was also exploded exactly 14 weeks after the Allied landing in Normandy when troops of General Hodge's First U.S. Army, pushing through Luxemburg, crossed into the Reich near the town of Trier or Treves on the river Saar. The invasion of Germany was a momentous event both from the point of view of its moral and material effects. Except for its effect on the German people, no immediate startling results were expected from the Allied invasion of Germany, for Hitler was expected to defend the Fatherland with all the strength he could command. The penetration of the Siegfried Line sent a thrill of joy in all the countries of the United Nations and electrified the morale of the Allied forces, while it rang the death knell for Hitler and Hitlerism.

On a continuous 500 mile line from the North Sea to the Swiss border six great armies under the Supreme Command of General Eisenhower pressed eastwards, preceded by swarms of aircraft which drove the *Luftwaffe* out of the skies and smashed military targets. The Nazi airforce was decisively defeated before the Allied invasion of France began, but it was generally expected that Hitler would keep in reserve a powerful air fleet to back up his troops when the borders of Germany were reached. The *Luftwaffe* did indeed offer battle on a grand scale, but it suffered crushing reverses. In two days' fighting alone 350 enemy machines were destroyed over the Siegfried Line. Meanwhile massive Allied air armadas combined strategical with tactical bombing; they concentrated on western Germany from the Siegfried Line to cities like Frankfurt and Stuttgart which were feeding the forward troops, and they delivered devastating blows. In six days U. S. aircraft dropped 21,000 tons of bombs; in four days the R. A. F. dropped 13,000 tons. Air destruction on so terrific a scale was one of the most potent factors that made for Germany's defeat.

The position of the Allied armies was as follows. It is a remarkable coincidence that the U. S. First Army's advance into the Reich followed the path of the Nazis' sudden invasion of France in 1940 through Luxemburg and the Ardennens Forest in southern Belgium. But we need not assume the reason to be the same, namely, that the defenders did not consider the Ardennes a feasible route for a large army. Hitler was more concerned about the northern end of the Siegfried Line than its centre. The reason was obvious; there was doubt as to whether the Line proper extended along the Dutch border to the sea. But even if it did the northern portion was weaker than the

rest, and Hitler wanted time to get his coastal troops over the Scheldt estuary. Therefore the Germans resisted furiously the advance of the British Second Army which was slowly forcing its way over a series of canals from Belgium into Holland. General Hodge's U. S. First Army distinguished itself by breaking into Germany on an 80 mile front stretching from the neighbourhood of Aachen to Trier near the junction of the Moselle and the Saar. It was this army which captured Maastricht, the first Dutch city to be liberated, and smashed into the Siegfried Line around Aachen. Further south General Patton's Third Army struck a fatal blow to the Germans' Moselle front by capturing Eptual and the old fortress town of Nancy. This army also linked up with the Seventh U. S. Army from the Rhone valley, by the union of the two groups and the French forces which operated with them a large number of Germans was cut off from the Belfort gap. Both armies converged on Belfort which was stubbornly defended by the Germans owing to its key position. Between them the First and Third Armies threatened the great Saar industrial and mining district so valuable to the Nazis.

The Canadian Army on the Channel coast pushed on towards the mouths of the Scheldt and drew the net still tighter around the Germans, numbering about 20,000, who were locked up in Boulogne, Cape Griz Nez, Calais and Dunkirk. It must be remembered that in spite of the Allied invasion of France some of the French ports and the Channel Islands were in the hands of the Nazis, and the Allies had to fight bitterly for months to capture these posts and islands.

A grim battle raged on the Adriatic flank of the German Gothic Line in Italy. It will be recalled that

General Alexander decided to make an effort to break through the Gothic Line between Pesaro and Rimini, he secretly massed a large force and achieved substantial initial gains. But Keselring, terrified of losing his last front south of the Po reacted quickly by throwing in strong reinforcements probably brought from other parts of the Line, and held on tenaciously to positions just south of Rimini. British, Canadian, Indian, Polish and Greek troops of the Eighth Army on this sector strived to smash the Rimini bottleneck. They captured the 7 000 yards long Coriano San Savino ridge, which was the biggest obstacle in their path using flame throwers to deal with dug-in Nazi tanks. In spite of the tremendous efforts of the Eighth Army the progress of the battle had been very slow. It seemed that Hitler had decided to hold on to the Gothic Line in Italy in order to prevent the link up of General Alexander's Army with the Americans advancing into southern France.

## ALLIES INVADE GREECE

On October 5 1944 a small British force invaded Greece and the neighbouring islands. The Allied landing in Albania and Greece was simultaneous and it was meant to speed the parting guests who had considerably overstayed their welcome. It did not appear as the latest of the series of landings in force on the Continent, which Mr Churchill promised in June. With the invasion of Greece and Albania the Nazi position in the Balkans became so entirely untenable that it was difficult to imagine that they would offer more than the resistance of rearguards. The landing itself was unchalant and the campaign progressed with ease. The capture of Samos Kythera and two unspecified islands demonstrated the intrinsic

weakness of the German position and the unchallenged superiority of Allied arms in the area

There can have been no more humiliating episode in all the history of the *Wehrmacht* than the amazing campaign in Greece. A mere handful of British troops, as invading armies were reckoned, bid fair to evict Germans from that country. Corinth had fallen almost without a shot. Athens itself had been liberated by the patriots. With the liberation of Greece one more Government in exile would return home. The recapture of Greece sealed the fate of 20,000 Germans in Crete, Rhodes and other islands.

The conflict in Greece lasted just over a month. Hitler did not make a determined stand, for he realised the hopelessness of the situation. The Germans in Greece and Yugoslavia were practically surrounded and their only way of retreat was through Hungary, the only country in the Balkans which still continued to fight on the side of the Axis. Synchronising with the invasion of Greece by the British troops, the Russians launched an attack against Hungary and Czechoslovakia on whose borders the Russian Army had stood more than a month. This new offensive decided the battle in the Balkans. The Soviet offensive was directed towards the flank of the Germans retreating from Greece and if the offensive would have been swift the Germans would have been encircled and annihilated. Before the Allied pincers could catch them the German troops retreated into Hungary. Thus the reconquest of Greece was just a walkover and the liberation of this country was made possible by the vigorous co-operation of the patriot forces.

The liberation of Greece presented the Allies with a knotty problem of establishing a stable Government in that country. Immediately after the liberation of Greece from the Nazis a government under the leadership of Papandreou was formed in that country but this government did not enjoy support from a certain section of the people, while this government was installed in power by Britain. The progressive group of the population which was made up of Greek Communists extreme left wing labour groups and some Macedonian and Bulgarian elements demanded the resignation of Papandreou's Cabinet and the establishment of a popular government. The trouble arose when these elements took the law into their own hands and advanced towards the capital with the set purpose of seizing power by force of arms. Thus a civil war broke out and the British military authorities in Greece were compelled to intervene in the interest of peace.

British intervention in Greece was severely criticised at home and abroad, but Mr Churchill took full responsibility for his actions and ordered General Scobie, the British Commander in Greece to take adequate measures to restore and maintain order. Mr Churchill's action is justifiable from the military stand point. The war against the Nazis had not finally ended and as such it was necessary to protect the rear from disruptionists. The revolt of the small but well organised Communist Party threatened to create chaos and confusion in a land which had been liberated from the Germans only a few days ago, and if they would have been allowed to have their own way they would have established a government which would not have enjoyed the full support of the population. And besides the seizure of power by one party by force of arms would defeat the very purpose for which the war was

fought. And but for British intervention the civil war would have continued and would have spread to the front line to the great advantage of the enemies.

There was another aspect of the situation. The miraculous victory of the Red Army had a salutary effect on the peoples of the Balkan States. The appreciation of the prowess of the Red Army inculcated an appreciation of the Soviet system. Since the entry of Russia into the war on the side of the Anglo-American powers, Communist propaganda was carried on in all the countries of the United Nations. The Russian victories in the battle-front were made much of by the Communists to sing praises of Stalin and the Soviet system. And the Communists of the Balkan and Baltic States did hope to establish Soviet systems of Government in all these countries immediately after the termination of the war. And the revolt in Greece was the first attempt at Sovietising the Balkans. The attempt failed as it was of a revolutionary character. Soviet influence is bound to play a large part in shaping the destinies of the Baltic and Balkan countries for many years to come and the Sovietising of Eastern Europe will be a slow, unceremonial and underground process.

Anyhow public opinion of Mr. Churchill's handling of the Greek situation was so bitter and clamorous that the British Prime Minister was forced to visit Athens and to bring about a reconciliation of the various parties and groups and to set up a more agreeable Government in that country. But no observer will forget the Communist revolt in Greece was a miniature "Russian Revolution" that failed. There was one significant difference: The Russian Revolution was the spontaneous rising of a people against their oppressive rulers, while in Greece a small minority of the people, a few thousand, knowing

inability to gain power by popular vote endeavoured to subjugate one million peaceful citizens. This was possible because this minority was fully armed with weapons supplied to them by the British to fight the Nazis while the vast majority of the population was in a state of semi-starvation. Therefore, the rebels were the masters of the situation and did not encounter any serious opposition. And in the name of freedom the rebels subjected the population to all the horrors of a total war. Thus it was in the interest of peace that Britain intervened and quelled the revolt.

## \* THE LAST RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE

The winter offensive of 1944-45 was considered to be the last offensive of the war by the Russians, though newspapers in Britain and U.S.A. called it the next to last Russian offensive. This offensive distinguished itself from previous offensives by the magnitude of its strategic intention and the masses of men and material which it had used. When the Germans were in sight of Moscow in 1941, Zhukov's counter blow had the important but limited purpose of relieving the capital. When the German General Paulus was attacking Stalingrad in 1942 the Soviet counter attack had the limited intention of destroying the Sixth Army and cutting off the enemy in the Caucasus. In the great campaigns of the summer, 1943, Rokossovsky and Timoshenko cleared the Ukraine as far as the Dnieper at an average rate of little more than four miles a day. The 'hedgehogs' and bolt positions like Smolensk and Orel had to be reduced at a painful cost. The rate of the Soviet advance indicated the German strategy to fight their battles on Russian soil. But in the winter of 1944 the Soviet progress averaged 20 miles a day. Now also the Red Army's

swift advance into Poland was a reflection of German strategy ; but a strategy forced on them by the superiority in armour, manpower and generalship of the Russians. Not daring to risk a battle of annihilation on the Polish plains or in their former Silesian salient, the Germans drew back, conserving their armour and men for the last battle.

The most important Soviet victory in the first few days of the offensive was Koniev's drive into Silesia, the real heart of German war industry. Since the air-war over Germany began in 1941, Hitler tried to shift the war industry from the Ruhr to Silesia. Here Rheinmetallborsig, Germany's biggest armament works, were evacuated from the Ruhr to Borsigwalde, near Beuthen. Here, Krupp set up his factories at Koenigshuette and Laurahutte. To compensate for the loss of the I. G. chemical plants in the Ruhr, the Germans built nitrate and sulphur extraction plants at Chorzow and Sosnowiec. But most important of all were the synthetic oil plants at Kattowice and Beuthen - built to replace the Ruhr plants destroyed by the R. A. F. These industrial plants in Silesia were to the Germans what the Ural armament industry had been to Russia. Koniev's drive into Silesia deprived Germany her last strategic reserve of war industry. With the loss of Silesia Germany lost the war, for Germany could not mount a new major offensive to retake Silesia.

It was expected that the powerful large scale offensive the Russians had launched would be supported by a fresh and vigorous offensive by the British and American forces in the west. But nothing happened. Once the Germans withdrew from France and got behind the Siegfried Line they determined to offer stiffer resistance. And the signs were that the Germans would mount a strong counter-offensive to push back the Allied forces from the German

soff In spite of superior armaments mastery of the air, and able leadership the British and American forces were halted in front of the Siegfried Line for a few months. And the lull in the fighting on the Western Front made the Allied leaders optimistic about an easy and quick victory. After the magnificently executed landing operations of the Allies in June, the real war situation became secondary in importance on the "News Front" the headlines being repeatedly and continuously pirated by the Allied spokesmen and thus predicting an early and summary collapse of the Germans on the West. Mr Churchill predicted victory by the end of summer in the first instance, then by the end of autumn and finally, after many disappointments discreetly refused to think of victory at all for the present.

On the Russian front also things had not progressed according to expectation. The Red Army was stopped at the gates of Warsaw. The Russian offensive was launched with surprising rapidity and vigour that the Germans were routed and were not expected to establish any defence line before they reached Berlin. But the Wehrmacht succeeded in establishing the defence on fresh lines where it materially succeeded in containing the Soviet assaults *en masse*. The defence line in Warsaw stood in spite of the very violent thrusts of the Soviet forces—aided as it was most substantially by the truly valiant attempts of "General Bor" and his gallant and heroic two hundred thousand Polish patriots. That the Soviet assault failed in spite of such a major diversion in great force at the rear was proof enough of the resources and efficiency of the Wehrmacht. In the west and the east the nearer the Allied forces advanced towards the frontiers of Germany the greater and stronger became the opposition and it seemed that the Germans would force a long war of attrition on their opponents.

1945

The new war was ushered in by Marshal von Rundstedt's offensive on the Western Front. The offensive which was launched on the morning of December 16 came as a great fillip to German morale but even so the Nazis did not gain their objective. Had they cut across Belgium to the sea and secured the port of Antwerp they would have been in a position to delay for a long time an Anglo-American offensive. Beyond pushing the Americans a bit back the German offensive in Belgium did not achieve much. Rundstedt's offensive in another direction was a better enterprise. After eight days of victorious outrush to the banks of the Meuse the Germans came up before the citadel of Bastogne. The Germans delivered an ultimatum to the isolated Allied garrison in the city before they stormed its defences. But the defenders hurled defiance at the invaders and put up stubborn resistance which had the effect of slowing down the enemy thrust. Bastogne was a key position to the enemy's communication system in that region and it was imperative that the Allies should hold the town if they wanted to wrest the initiative from the Nazis.

On the Eastern Front the new year brought spectacular victories. The Russian winter offensive progressed wonderfully along the entire front. The Germans did make ferocious attempts at some points to stem the onrush of the Red Army, but these attempts met with only partial and temporary successes. There was a short lull on the eastern front when the new year dawned but by the middle of January the Russians completely altered the complexion of the eastern front and therefore of the war. It is difficult to realise that so much could be achieved in such a brief period of time. The Germans were thrust across the plains in south Poland to the borders on Silesia by a pretty and

on the German strategy was obvious. Faced by the grave positions of the whole German army groupings south of the Polish capital, the enemy abandoned long held positions on the Vistula preparatory to resuming resistance at some prepared positions along the Oder well inside Germany. But the Russian offensive swept forward carrying everything before it.

The political implications of the liberation of Warsaw by the Red Army is very significant. Stalin did not fight to surrender the fruits of victory to the Anglo-American powers. He installed a new Polish Government in power. This is known as the Lublin Government and is recognised as the provisional Polish Government by Russia. This move by Stalin brought the Anglo American powers into immediate conflict with Soviet Russia. Now the Polish Government in Britain, recognised by Britain and America as the legally constituted Polish Government fell into disgrace. Though Mr Churchill knew that the situation warranted his surrender to Stalin he made an effort at saving his and his country's face. He felt that it was necessary to come to some definite understanding with Stalin. To discuss and settle the policy the Big Three should pursue in Europe after the fall of Germany a conference of the Big Three was arranged.

## YALTA

In the month of February, 1945, Marshal Stalin, Mr. Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt met at Yalta in Crimea to plan and shape the future of the world. The Yalta Conference was to decide the basic plan on which the three Big Powers would mould and shape not only their mutual relation but the relation of all the nations of the world towards the Big Three and towards one

another. It was to prove as the nucleus of world peace. In spite of the encouraging news from the battle front, all eyes were turned to Yalta and the world was waiting eagerly for the decisions of the conference.

The talks proceeded for a week and at the end the Big Three issued a joint statement. The statement read—

'We have considered and determined the military plans of the three Allied Powers for the final defeat of the common enemy.

"The Military Staffs of the three Allied Powers have met in daily meetings throughout the conference. These meetings have been most satisfactory from every point of view and have resulted in close co-ordination of the military effort of the three Allied Powers. The fullest information has been interchanged. The timing, scope and co-ordination of new and even more powerful blows to be launched by our armies and air forces into the heart of Germany from the east, west, north and south have been fully agreed and planned in detail. Our combined military plans will be made known only as we execute them, but we believe that the very close working partnership among the three Staffs attained at this conference will result in shortening the war. The meetings of the three Staffs will be continued in future whenever the need arises.

'Nazi Germany is doomed. The German people will only make the cost of their defeat heavier to themselves by attempting to continue hopeless resistance.

"We have agreed on common policies and plans for enforcing unconditional surrender terms which we

shall impose together on Nazi Germany after German armed resistance has been finally crushed. These terms will not be made known until the final defeat of Germany is accomplished.

"Under agreed plans forces of the three powers will each occupy a separate zone of Germany, co-ordinated administration and control has been provided for under the plan through a Central Control Commission consisting of the supreme commanders of the three powers with headquarters in Berlin. It has been agreed that France, should be invited by the three powers if she should so desire to take a zone of occupation and to participate as the fourth member of the Control Commission. The limits of the French zone will be agreed by the four Governments concerned through their representatives on the European Advisory Commission.

"It is our inflexible purpose to destroy German militarism and Nazism and to ensure that Germany will never again be able to disturb the peace of the world. We are determined to disarm and disband all German forces, break up for all time the German General Staff that has repeatedly contrived resurgence of German militarism; remove or destroy all German equipment, eliminate or control all German industry that could be used for military production; bring all the war criminals to justice and swift punishment and exact preparation in kind for the destruction wrought by the Germans; wipe out the Nazi Party, Nazi laws, organizations and institutions; remove all Nazi and militarist influences from public offices and from the cultural and economic life of the German people; and take in harmony such other

measures in Germany as may be necessary to the future peace and safety of the world

It is not our purpose to destroy Germany but only when Nazism and militarism have been extirpated will there be hope for a decent life for the Germans and a place for them in the comity of nations

We have considered the question of damage caused by Germany to the Allied nations in this war and recognize it as just that Germany be obliged to make compensation for the damage in kind to the greatest extent possible. A commission for compensation of damage will be established. The commission will be instructed to consider the question of extent and methods for compensating the damage caused by Germany to Allied countries. The commission will work in Moscow

"We are resolved upon the earliest possible establishment with our allies of a general international organization to maintain peace and security. We believe that this is essential both to prevent aggression and remove political, economic and social cause of war through close and continuous collaboration of all peace loving people

The foundation were laid at Dumbarton Oaks. On the important question of voting procedure however agreement was not reached there. The present conference has been able to resolve the difficulty. We have agreed that a conference of United Nations should be called to meet at San Francisco in the U.S.A. on April 25, 1945 to prepare the charter of such an organization along the lines proposed in the informal conversations at Dumbarton Oaks.

"The Government of China and the Provisional Government of France will be immediately consulted and invited to sponsor invitations to the conference jointly with the Governments of the United States, Great Britain, and U. S. S. R. As soon as consultation with China and France has been completed the text of the proposals on voting procedure will be made public."

"We have drawn up and subscribed to a declaration on liberated Europe. This declaration provides for concerting the policies of the three Powers and for joint action by them in meeting the political and economic problems of liberated Europe in accordance with democratic principles."

(Sd.) Winston Churchill. Franklin D. Roosevelt.  
J. V. Stalin.

Besides the above statement a declaration of policy was made jointly by the Big Three. The declaration reads:

The premier of the U. S. S. R., the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and the President of the United States of America have consulted with each other in the common interests of the peoples of their countries and those of liberated Europe. They jointly declare their mutual agreement to concert during the temporary period of instability in liberated Europe the policies of their three governments in assisting the peoples of Europe liberated from the domination of Nazi Germany and the people of former Axis-satellite States to solve by democratic means their pressing political and economic problems. The establishment of order in Europe and rebuilding of national economic life must be achieved by processes which will enable the liberated peoples to destroy the last vestiges

of Nazism and Fascism and to create democratic institutions of their own choice.

This is the principle of Atlantic Charter—the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live, restoration of sovereign rights and self-government to those peoples who have been forcibly deprived of them by aggressor nations and to foster conditions in which liberated peoples may exercise these rights. The three governments will jointly assist people in any European liberated state or a former Axis satellite State in Europe where, in their judgement, conditions require: 1

Firstly, to establish conditions of peace, secondly\* to carry out emergency measures for the relief of distressed people, thirdly to form an interim government broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and pledged to the earliest possible establishment through free elections of Governments responsive to the will of the people, and, fourthly, to facilitate wherever necessary holding of such elections.

The three governments will consult other United Nations and the provisional authority of other Governments in Europe in matters of direct interests to themselves are under consideration. Then in the opinion of the three Governments, conditions in any European liberated State or any former Axis satellite State in Europe make such action necessary they will immediately consult together on measures necessary to discharge joint responsibilities set forth in this declaration.

By this declaration we reaffirm our faith in the principles of the Atlantic Charter and our pledge in

the declaration with other peace-loving nations of a world order dedicated to peace, security, freedom and general well being of all mankind. In issuing this declaration the three Powers express the hope that the provisional government of the French Republic may be associated with themselves in the procedure suggested.

We came to the Crimen conference resolved to settle our difference about Poland. We discussed fully all aspects of the question. We reaffirmed our common desire to see established a strong, free, independent and democratic Poland. As a result of our discussion we have agreed on conditions in which a new Polish provisional Government of national unity, may be formed in such a manner as to command recognition by the three major Powers.

The agreement reached is as follows:— A new situation has been created in Poland as a result of her complete liberation by the Red Army. This calls for the establishment of a Polish Provisional Government which can be more broadly based than was possible before the recent liberation of western Poland.

The Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should therefore be recognised on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad. This new Government should then be called the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity.

M. Molotov, Mr. Harriman and Sir Archibald Clerk Kerr are authorised as the commission to consult in the first instance in Moscow with members of

the present Provisional Government and with other Polish democratic leaders from within Poland and from abroad with the view to reorganisation of the present Government along the above lines. This Polish Provisional Government of National Unity shall be pledged to holding free and unfettered elections as soon as possible on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot. In these elections all democratic and anti-Nazi parties shall have a right to take part and put forward candidates. When the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity has been properly formed in conformity with the above the Government of the U S S R which now maintains diplomatic relations with the present Provisional Government of Poland and the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the United States will establish diplomatic relations with the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity and will exchange Ambassadors by whose reports the respective Governments will be kept informed about the situation in Poland.

The three Governments consider that the eastern frontier of Poland should follow the Curzon Line with digression from it in some regions of five to eight kilometers in favour of Poland. They recognize that Poland must receive substantial accessions of territory in the north and the west. They feel that the opinion of the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity should be sought in the course for the extent of these accessions and that final delimitations of the western frontier of Poland should thereafter await the peace conference.

Yugoslavia— We have agreed to recommend to Marshal Tito and Dr Subasic that the agreement between them should be put into effect immediately and that a new Government should be formed on the basis of that agreement. We also recommend that as soon as the new government has been formed it should declare that firstly the Anti Fascist Assembly of National Liberation should be extended to include members of the last Yugoslav Parliament who have not compromised themselves by collaboration with the enemy thus forming a body to be known as a temporary Parliament and secondly, legislative Acts passed by the Assembly of National Liberation will be subject to subsequent ratification by a constituent Assembly. There was also a general review of other Balkan questions.

Meetings of foreign Secretaries —Throughout the conference, besides daily meetings of the heads of Governments and Foreign Secretaries, separate meetings of the three Foreign Secretaries and their advisers have also been held daily. These meetings have proved of the utmost value and the conference agreed that a permanent machinery should be set up for regular consultation between the three Foreign Secretaries. They will therefore meet as often as may be necessary, probably about every three or four months. These meetings will be held in rotation in the three capitals, the first meeting being held in London in the three capitals the first meeting being held in London after the United Nations conference on world organizations.

Unity for peace as for war — Our meeting here in the Crimea has reaffirmed our common determination

to maintain and strengthen in the peace to come that unity of purpose and of action which has made victory possible and certain for the United Nations in this war. We believed that this is a sacred obligation which our Governments owe to our peoples and to the people of the world. Only with continuing and growing co-operation and understanding among our three countries and among all the peace loving nations can the highest aspiration of humanity be realized—a secure and lasting peace which will, in the words of the Atlantic Charter, "afford and assurance that all men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want." It is considered that victory in this war and establishment of the proposed International organisation will provide the greatest opportunity to create in the years to come the essential conditions of such a peace.

The decisions of the Yalta Conference were based on the theory that an international organisation to secure and maintain world peace after the war could be built up only by the continuance of a military alliance between Britain, United States and the Soviet Union. The theory is faulty in two respects. The first objection is that rarely in the world's history have military alliances lasted for more than a few years. National policies and ambitions change, revolutions of public feeling occur against individual leaders dethroning them from power, and jealousies and antagonisms develop between the very partners to the alliance. Between the time when Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt flattered their touching personal friendship to the world as a grand basis for Anglo American political and military solidarity and now, many rifts have appeared to spoil harmonious relations between the two countries.

In the British Press there have been scarcely veiled outbursts of resentment over the all pervasive dominance of American authority in the organisation of war effort on the Allied side. There have been Anglo American feuds over post-war schemes of development. Against accusations of imperialist reaction pitted against Britain by American critics, there have been retaliatory comments about the treatment meted out to the Negroes in America. Only Mr. Churchill's dogged lead and President Roosevelt's unflinching tact that kept the two countries united so far. But there is no guarantee that Britain and United States would stand united in peace as in war.

Towards Russia, both in Britain and United States, the old sentiment of grateful admiration for having shattered the myth of German invincibility in arms, has been slowly cooling under the influence of a new dread of Russian invincibility taking the place of the German. A measure of Russian power as already achieved and tacitly bowed to by the other partners to the alliance in the wake of military triumph against Hitler, may be seen in the decision of the Yalta Conference over Poland. In its origin the present war was meant to defend the integrity of Poland against German aggression. But towards its close the world is witnessing the extraordinary spectacle of the vaunted defenders of Polish integrity themselves sanctioning encroachment by one of themselves on Polish territory to a degree not dreamt of even by Hitler. Mr. Churchill's concession to Russian demands in respect of Poland can certainly not be attributed either to intellectual agreement or affectionate sympathy. Churchillian intervention against E. L. A. S. in Greece had the only motive of nipping in the bud all prospect of a Communist dominated regime. In exchange for freedom of action in Greece, Mr. Churchill.

let Stalin have his own way in Poland. Thus it is evident that in spite of apparent unity between Britain, U.S.A. and the Soviet Union each is trying to pull its own way and apparent unity is maintained only at the expense of the smaller nations. The ambitions and jealousies of the Big Three will grow to bursting point in a few years time and the very concessions that each of the Big Powers allow the others will form a bone of contention between the Big Powers and thus will sow the seed for the Third World War. Thus the military alliance between the big Three instead of maintaining peace will antagonise the Big Powers against each other and against the other nations of the world over which the Big Powers will hold a dictatorial sway.

The second objection to the Yalta plan is that the other members of the United Nations will never allow themselves to be dominated by a dictatorship composed of three great powers. The anti-fascist professions that from part of the military and political leadership of the war on the side of the United Nations enjoin on the victors other duties beyond merely crushing the Nazi system. No overlordship based on mere military power will be accepted either in Germany or elsewhere. Yalta has replaced Nazism by a triple dictatorship and as such cannot secure and maintain a just peace.

## BATTLE OF THE RHINE

The battle of the Rhineland began in November 1944. General Eisenhower opened his six pronged offensive in the west. The offensive as a whole came as an unpleasant surprise to the Germans, but the Nazis managed to stem the Allied advances along the entire northern sector. And in December 1944 Rundstedt's counter offensive pushed the Allies back considerably in the Ardennes sector. Since the

break through in Normandy and the rush across the plains of France, the Allied armies had attacked the Nazi lines a number of times, but never made any great headway. But there was one exception. It was the performance of the French forces in the Belfort sector. The performance of the French forces surprised their Allies as much as their enemies. It was on the northern part of the front, where three Allied armies estimated at 400,000 were striking on a front of barely 30 miles, that the attention of the world was centred. The First French Army operating in the extreme south went more or less unnoticed.

It was precisely this army, however, which hit the headlines in a spectacular fashion by breaking through the Belfort gap. The French success was more spectacular than strategic, but the French Army was the first to reach the Rhine, the objective of the Allied offensive. Thus the battle of Rhine began with the capture of the Belfort gap in the south, but a break through into the Rhineland was delayed considerably by German counter-offensive in the northern sector. A decisive offensive was launched in March, 1945. Along the entire Rhineland front, from Montgomery's armies in the North to Tassigny's French army in the South the Allies went over to the offensive. The main weight of the armoured strength was concentrated on the line from Cleves south to Duren, with the general objective of the Ruhr. This time the western offensive became part of the joint East-West offensive of the armies of the United Nations. While Eisenhower was hammering at the gates of the Ruhr, in the east Koniev's men were hitting hard at the door of the key fortress triangle that guarded the southern approaches to Berlin the Kottbus-Forst Guben triangle. The German attempted to counter-attack in this area, hoping to protect both Berlin and the Dresden-Leipzig.

Industrial base, but the attempt petered out and Koniev continued to advance.

The battles in the East were going badly for Hitler. While Koniev was slowly reducing the encircled Breslau garrison and pushing the Nazis back west and north Zhukov's troops in the centre had finally cleared their main communications line by freeing Poznan, in the course of which 23 000 Germans were taken prisoner. Right in the north Rokossovsky's army was twenty miles from Danzig and was slowly fighting its way along the old Polish corridor. Fighting here was difficult and necessarily labourious for the ground was studded with easily defensible lakes and marshes. Still further north the Nazis were making desperate attempts to break out from Koenigsburg northwards but were being steadily pressed back.

And while on the land the Nazis were being steadily driven back, from the air every night thousands of Allied bombers were blasting the main cities of the third Reich. The combined blows rained on Germany from East and West showed that the Yalta decision was being implemented in the military field.

The first crossing of the Rhine was effected by the Americans. The First American Army crossed the river at Remagen, nearly half way between Bonn and Coblenz. Before this eventful move the Americans had captured Cologne itself with surprising rapidity. The bridgehead of Wesel lying between General Hodges here and General Patton at Neuss had been left to be destroyed by the first

teaching the river north-west of Coblenz, it joined hands with the First Army at Andrenach. The first week of March found the Allied armies crossing the Rhine at several points and the crossing of the river started the real battle of the Rhineland. Once the river was crossed it was just a walk-over.

The crossing of the Rhine meant the decisive defeat of Germany. The Allied armies did not encounter any serious resistance in the Ruhr. The three main army groupings that penetrated deep into Germany did not face real organised opposition. In the far north, Field-Marshal Montgomery's 21st Army group broke through to a depth of 100 miles beyond the Rhine; the heavily armoured British Second Army outflanked the Germans fighting in Holland and was threatening the vital rail junction of Osnabruck. The result of this swift advance was that the escape route eastwards for all the Nazis still fighting in Holland was threatened.

Further south, General Simpson's U. S. Ninth Army which had driven across the Rhine south of Wesal straight eastwards joined hands with General Hodges' U. S. First Army that had broken out of Remagen bridge-head south of Cologne and turned north-eastwards in a wide arc just west of Paderborn. The link-up between the two U. S. Armies resulted in the Ruhr being completely isolated from the rest of Germany and in trapping 40 to 50 thousand Nazi troops in a huge area of about 3,000 square miles.

Still further south, Patton's U. S. Third Army was pushing forward towards Cassel, Wurzburg and Nuremberg, and in the southern most sector both General Patch's Seventh Army and the French First Army had met and were advancing together. Thus after the crossing of the

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reaching the river north-west of Coblenz, it joined hands with the First Army at Andrenach. The first week of March found the Allied armies crossing the Rhine at several points and the crossing of the river started the real battle of the Rhineland. Once the river was crossed it was just a walk-over.

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Rhine, the Allied armies were racing to Berlin. The German troops were greatly disorganised and showed no sign of vigorous resistance. But it was expected that Germany's surrender would be possible only after the fall of Berlin. Therefore Berlin was the objective of the Allied armies advancing from the west.

The battle of the Rhine coincided with the launching of the Soviet Spring offensive. In southern Europe fighting had flared up along the Austro-Hungarian border. After the fall of Budapest the armies of Marshals Tolbukhin and Malinovsky were driving on Vienna at an increasing speed. In this sector also the Germans seemed to be as disorganised and disrupted as in the west. Tolbukhin's troops entered Wiener Neustadt (the aircraft manufacturing town) and were on the outskirts of the key railway junction of Graz. A third column of this army had broken through south of Lake Balaton and was moving towards the Austrian-Yugoslav frontier. All this entirely disrupted Nazi positions south of Vienna.

Further north from the north-east Malinovsky's men penetrated into the defences of Bratislava fortress town guarding the main eastern gateway to Vienna. And in northern Czechoslovakia Konev's First Ukrainian Front was menacing the key city of Moravia-Ostrava that guarded the entrance into Czechoslovakia. Thus the battle of Rhineland started the final stage of the war in Europe.

## BATTLE OF BERLIN

The first phase of the Soviet Spring offensive found two Russian armies making a lightning drive through Pomerania to the Baltic coast. Zhukov's First White Russian Front cleared almost the entire eastern bank of the lower Oder right up to its mouth opposite Stettin. It is

final clearing-up was capped with a sudden blow at Kustrin, the only big German town on the East bank not yet in Soviet hands, which was intended by Hitler's generals to be a thorn in the side of any Soviet offensive directed at Berlin.

Rokossorsky's army group concentrated on splitting up all the German forces cut off from the west by his dash to Kostrin earlier. Now he was poised for a frontal attack on Danzig. At the end of the first phase of the new offensive the Soviet armies stood poised on the south-north line on the eastern banks of the Oder and its tributary the Neisse for a drive towards Berlin.

Thus the stage was set for the Battle of Berlin. Hitler did hope to hold the Soviet armies on the Oder long enough to enable him to withdraw considerable forces to South-Germany, Czechoslovakia and Austria. Hitler was determined to hold this area. He knew well that this mountainous territory would offer the best facilities for a defensive battle and he had already stocked this area with reserves. His plan was to offer a bitter defensive struggle and prolong the war. He had also decided to defend Berlin to the last man. But unfortunately for Hitler his plans miscarried.

The second phase of the Soviet Spring offensive found the Russian armies crossing the Oder with ease and racing towards Berlin. The Germans put up stubborn resistance all along the road to Berlin, but the Russians pushed them back and entered the suburbs of Berlin. As the Russians neared the suburbs of Berlin Marshal Stalin assumed command of the forces driving towards Berlin. It seemed that the Russian Dictator wanted to enter Berlin as a conqueror at the head of his armies. Now Hitler also assumed command of the forces defending Berlin. Thus the Battle

of Berlin or better say, the duel between Marshal Stalin and Herr Hitler began

The Anglo American forces were apprehensive of the latest Russian move. They wanted to be in Berlin first, but it seemed that Russians would enter the German capital before they could reach even the suburbs of the city. Therefore the armies of General Eisenhower started a vigorous drive towards Berlin. This drive met with great success, for the Anglo American forces could reach the outskirts of Berlin when the Soviet forces were hammering at the gates of the city from the east. It seemed that the Americans and the Russians would enter Berlin simultaneously, but for certain political reasons the Russians were allowed to enter Berlin first.

In other sectors the battle was progressing satisfactorily. The British Second Army captured Bremen, the second largest port in Germany, and was battling within Hamburg. Munich the shrine of Nazidom stood in peril. It was being threatened both by the U. S. Third and Seventh Armies. General Patch had at several places crossed the Danube, the first line of defence of the projected Nazi 'redoubt'. But General Patton crossed into Austria itself and was menacing Linz. Two towns of importance in Germany, Regensburg and Ingolstadt, and one in Czechoslovakia, Eger, had fallen to the Third Army.

The battle inside Berlin followed a pattern which had become common during this war. The art of street fighting has been carried to a perfection. It was so in Stalingrad and only slightly less in Budapest. The Germans defended every street and every building in Berlin. In spite of this and in spite of Hitler's personal command the Russians were winning the battle. Berlin was outflanked,

the bigger part of it captured and its aerodrome taken. The city was bombed and burned and practically destroyed before it was finally taken. The Battle of Berlin lasted for more than a fortnight.

## GERMANY SURRENDERS

On May 1 1945 the Allies announced that Germany had surrendered unconditionally. The surrender took place at 2.41 p.m. (French time) on the 1st of May at a little red school house which was General Eisenhower's headquarters. The surrender was signed for Germany by Colonel General Gustav Jodl. The unconditional surrender brought to an end the greatest war that the world has known. It will be misleading and false in perspective to regard the surrender of the German forces as merely the triumph of superior cannon. Weary humanity must fain believe that the coming years hold in store a brighter Hellas rearing its mountains from serener waves. An opportunity to mould the lives of unborn generations now presents itself to the statesmen of the world. There will be countless prayers that their feet may not stray from the path of righteousness.

The poppies of the fields of Flanders were forgotten in the gilded halls of Versailles at the last judgment of the nations. Herr Hitler, the architect of the second ruin, owes his rise to this oblivion. Though the war began formally on that September day six years ago its origin is undoubtedly the iniquitous treaty of Versailles. But it is also clear that the inherent Prussia in all the Germans greeted joyfully a war of *revanche*.

At this distance of time the phenomenal successes of Herr Hitler in the early days of the war appear only natural, in view of the preponderance of the German arms.

It is safe to say that no one in history missed victory by such a small margin. In the middle of 1940, only the English Channel stood between him and the conquest of the world. Exactly like the *Grande Armée* of Napoleon in the last century the Nazi hordes, baffled by that small strip of water marched east of the steppes, of Russia and to Stalingrad. It is undoubted that the invasion of Russia was the cardinal mistake of Herr Hitler's strategy.

It could be said by the end of 1942, with the strange coincidence of the defence of Stalingrad and the battle of El Alamein occurring almost simultaneously, that the war had turned in favour of the Allies. But not until the middle of 1944, though Italy had capitulated in the meanwhile, was the coping stone of victory laid. After the rescue of France the avenging Russians and the western Allies drove back the Germans before them from both sides. The fall of Berlin ended the war.

The German resistance did not end immediately after the signing of the surrender. It continued for a week till Grand Admiral Doenitz declared the unconditional surrender of all the fighting German troops on May 7, 1945. Immediately after the fall of Berlin Admiral Doenitz became the Head of the German Government and appointed the leading Reich Minister, Count Schwerin Von Krosigk for dealing with war tasks and this minister broadcast the surrender. He said— After a heroic fight of about six years of incomparable hardness Germany has succumbed to the overwhelming odds of her enemies. To continue the war would only mean senseless bloodshed and futile disintegration. Government which has a feeling of responsibility for the future of its nation, was compelled on the collapse of all physical and material forces to demand of the enemy the cessation of hostilities.

"It was the noblest task of the Admiral of the Fleet and of the Government supporting him after the terrible sacrifices which the war demanded, to save, in the last phase of the war, the lives of maximum number of fellow countrymen. That the war was not ended immediately and simultaneously in the East and in the West is to be explained by this reason alone. We end this gravest hour of the German nation and the Reich."

It was Admiral Doenitz who told the German people of Hitler's death. He claimed then that Hitler had appointed him as his successor on the previous day. Rumours of Hitler's death emanated from Russian sources even before the fall of Berlin. Even now it is not certain whether Hitler has really died. Rumours have it that Hitler has escaped and he is in hiding somewhere in South America. The Allies have instituted a vigorous search-campaign to unearth Hitler.

The end of Mussolini, the Axis partner and the father of Fascism in Europe, came just ten days before the surrender of Germany. The story of Mussolini's last hours was 'stranger than fiction'. The Duce was at Como, north of Milan, and there he assembled a "phantom" Council of Ministers. He was the showman to the end and issued dramatic orders by Radio to Fascists residing south of the river Po to proceed at once to Como. Mussolini still had 15,000 armed men at his disposal and the Allies demanded that these men should leave the town if the town was to be saved from bombing. But Mussolini refused to say a single word to save the town though the Allied planes repeatedly flew over signifying that they meant business. The immediate effect of his action was that the Fascist armed soldiers, so long loyal to Mussolini, deserted him and he was forced to flee for life. He

was captured near the village of Dongo near Como by a commissar of the 52nd Communist Garibaldi brigade while he was frantically trying to escape beyond the Swiss border. Mussolini was wearing a German military coat which he hoped would help him in crossing the Swiss frontier. Members of his 'Cabinet' were with him.

His captors decided on summary justice. After a ten-minute trial at Giuliano di Mazzegra near Como, Mussolini was sentenced to death. At 4 p m on April 28 a firing squad of 15 men of the Garibaldi division commanded by the Communist, Colonel Moscatelli, ended Mussolini's life.

With the death of Mussolini and the disappearance of Hitler, Fascism and Nazism, as a living cult and creed, has stopped to exist. It is too early to say whether the influence of these forces can be easily wiped out of existence with the end of the war. The forces of Fascism and Nazism held sway over the whole of Europe for more than fifteen years and the influence of these forces was felt in all corners of the globe. The conflagration these forces had started has now been extinguished by the United Nations, but the task of extirpating the influence of Fascism and Nazism from the face of the earth still faces the leaders of the world.

# HITLER'S WAR.

(Vols. I & II)

BY

H. R. AIYER

Price Rs. 1-8-0 each Vol.

This is a concise and simplified history of the Second World War, portions of which were previously published in separate parts. The earlier sections of the first volume deal with Hitler's conquests before the actual outbreak of hostilities, while the later portions trace the course of events from Munich to Dunkirk. The second volume consisting of two parts takes up the thread of the narrative from the collapse of France and discusses the events that led America's entry into the war, while the succeeding portions are devoted to Hitler's offensive against Russia, Japan's role as a belligerent and the advent of some post-war visions like Atlantic Character. Though the treatment of the theme is brief, it serves to present an easy and connected idea of the war.

"The Hindu", Madras

(dt. 1-7-1945.)